

FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE,

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, 1902, by Frank Tousey.

No. 5.

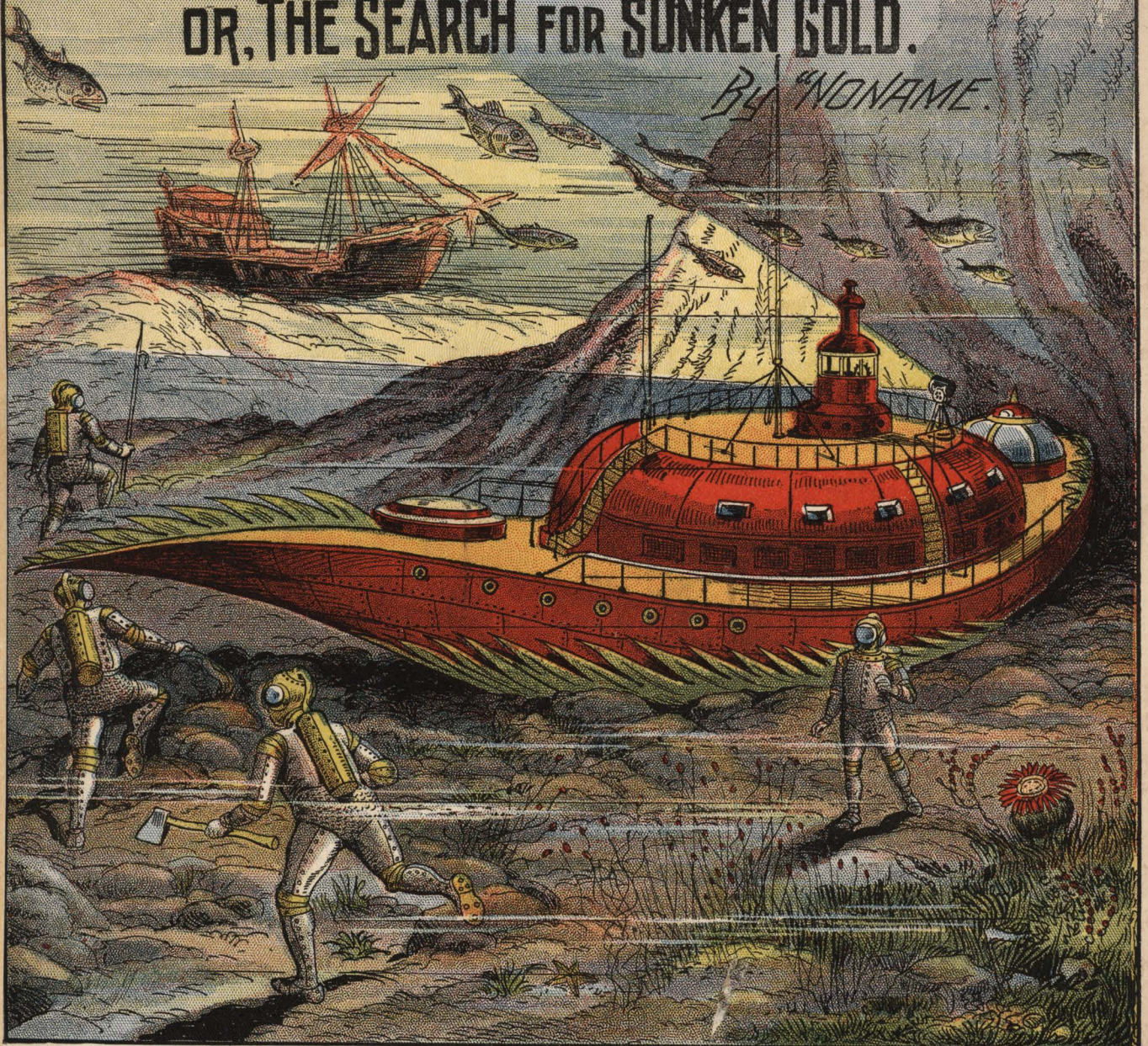
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NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 28, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

FRANK READE, JR.'S "SEA SERPENT!" OR, THE SEARCH FOR SUNKEN GOLD.

By "NOMAME."



After awhile they drew quite near to the coral incrustated ship. It lay half buried in the shifting sands. Hull and spars, and even many of the ropes, remained in their original position, though all were thickly incrustated in coral.

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Frank Reade, Jr.'s "Sea Serpent"

OR,

THE SEARCH FOR SUNKEN GOLD.

By "NONAME."

CHAPTER I.

THE SEA SERPENT.

Upon a bright September day there appeared in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, in the year 18—, a craft of such peculiar build and strange appearance as to claim the attention and excite the curiosity of the crews of all the other craft there anchored.

Sailors crowded into the rigging of their ships, captains brought their glasses to bear upon the newcomer, and some excitement was occasioned.

"What in the name of Davy Jones do ye call it?" cried one bluff Jack Tar on board a United States man-of-war. "I'll make my 'davy it's not like anything I've ever seen before."

"Right ye are, me hearty," rejoined a companion. "For all that it's a right snug lookin' craft. Mebbe she's a new English dynamite boat."

"More likely it's the big English racing yacht come over to race fer ther America's cup."

These and a hundred other surmises were indulged in. But straight up the harbor came the unknown craft.

When opposite the man-of-war she dipped her colors and let go with a salute from a gun in the bow.

It was a haval salute, too.

The puff of smoke from the muzzle was followed by a projectile striking the water not three hundred yards distant, and instantly a column of water rose sixty feet into the air.

"Gimcracks!" gasped the commander. "She carries a pneumatic gun!"

The warship answered the salute.

Then the newcomer glided by not one hundred yards distant.

Everything upon her decks could be plainly seen.

But there was no crew of bluejackets lounging over the rail or swinging in the shrouds, for shrouds she had none.

Only two men were visible, one being a negro, dressed in a natty naval uniform and standing by the rail; the other was an Irishman, with brick-red hair, who stood near the pilot-house.

Both had flags and waved them.

Amidships was a staff, upon which floated a large white flag, with a blue border.

And now those on board the warship could read the following words:

"Frank Reade, Jr."

Upon the bow of the craft was this legend, in gilt letters: "Sea Serpent."

In an instant all on board the warship understood the situation and recognized the new craft.

Not one of them but had heard of Frank Reade, Jr., the world famous inventor, and his marvelous submarine boats.

They saw at once that this was not a dynamite boat, a cruiser nor a monitor, or any sort of a war craft.

It was simply a submarine boat, and its peculiar shape was all in keeping with its name, Sea Serpent.

In shape it was long and narrow, with a sinuous slope of hull fore and aft.

The bow was curved and serpentine in contour, with a heavy ram. The hull was made of the finest steel.

The decks were narrow and steel plated. In the hull upon either side were dead-eye windows extending the full length of the craft.

The cabin was a long, round-roofed structure of steel also, with steel bands over it like the boiler of a locomotive.

In the forward end were two large square windows, with the thickest of plate glass, calculated to stand the hardest kind of usage.

Along the side were square windows of the same plate glass.

These were fitted with metal slides, which could be let down at will.

Below these were two rows of dead-eyes. These admitted plenty of light into the cabin.

Above the cabin was a dome-shaped pilot-house, with windows upon all sides. A deck ran along the roof of the cabin leading from the pilot-house fore and aft in the shape of a steamer's bridge.

A metal ladder led up either side to the bridge. All was cleverly railed in with brass.

On the forward part of the cabin's dome was a powerful searchlight, calculated to throw a good ways under water. This was an important adjunct.

Forward of the cabin was a dome-shaped structure, which was over the electrical engine-room, and was intended as a vestibule or means of leaving or entering the Sea Serpent while it was under water.

Inside was a circular chamber which, when in the dome, was empty, but as it revolved toward the open door instantly filled with water.

So that when the diver had once stepped into the chamber he would quickly find himself in the water, or, upon re-

turning, by means of a strong pump, the chamber would be quickly emptied. This enabled him to go safely in or out of the submarine boat when it was under water.

To describe in detail the delicate and beautiful mechanism of this part of the craft would take up much space. Therefore, we will not weary the reader with it.

In the stern of the boat was another dome, which was provided with machinery to operate the slides of a vast air-chamber in the center of the hull, and which was the means of sinking or raising the boat.

This was simply done by admitting water to the chamber when it would instantly sink. To lift the boat to the surface was to expel the water again by means of a powerful slide operated by a powerful electric engine.

We have described the Sea Serpent as she appeared floating upon the waters of Charleston Bay.

We will leave the description of the wonderful submarine boat's engines and her interior for another page, and first introduce the characters of our story and a few important incidents.

The Sea Serpent glided by the United States warship like her veritable namesake in ease and grace of movement.

"That is Frank Reade, Jr.'s craft, sure enough!" cried one of the officers of the warship. "Isn't she a dandy?"

"You are right," agreed a brother officer. "The United States Government ought to buy her for a submarine torpedo boat."

"Can't do it!"

"Why?"

"Because young Reade won't sell her. He has an aversion to any of his inventions being used for purposes of war. They are secrets of his, and as he has plenty of money he does not care to part with them."

"Ah, that is it, eh?"

"Yes. You have heard of him before, haven't you?"

"Well, yes."

"You know he lives in a beautiful little city called Readestown. His father was an inventor before him. They have large machine shops there for the manufacture solely of Frank's inventions. He is a young, handsome and talented fellow. I once had the pleasure of an introduction to him."

"Indeed!"

"I shall not soon forget it. I esteemed it an honor, for you feel at once as if you stood in the presence of genius when you stand before him."

"I should believe that."

"Now, you see that negro and Irishman on the deck?"

"Yes."

"Well, they are his two servants and his traveling companions, and the only crew he has on board the Sea Serpent."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes; I do."

"But, how can he operate so large a boat with so few men?"

"Easy enough. Everything is done by wonderful electric appliances. One man can sit up there in that pilot-house, and by touching different keys or levers, make the boat do anything he wishes."

"Wonderful!"

"Well, you may be sure it is. Indeed, that dorky and Hibernian are almost as celebrated as their master. The names of Barney and Pomp are inseparably connected with that of Frank Reade, Jr."

Indeed, the captain of the warship, for he it was, seemed very enthusiastic over the wonderful invention.

Barney, the Irishman, as the Sea Serpent glided by, leaned over the rail, and shouted:

"Hooray fer the United States!"

"Rah-rah!" replied the marines.

"Hooray fo' Frank Reade, Jr.!" yelled Pomp, apropos.

"Rah-rah-rah!" yelled the marines.

Barney leaned further over the rail and put all his strength into a belching cry:

"Hooray fer ould Oireland!"

The effect was tremendous. The marines, nine-tenths of whom were of Irish extraction, yelled themselves hoarse. When the Sea Serpent fired another shot with her electric guns, and passed on.

Half a mile beyond a tugboat came gliding out and ran up a signal flag.

Instantly the Sea Serpent came about and dropped anchor.

The tug ran alongside and several of the sailors made her fast.

A tall, handsome young man, with a distinguished air, stepped out from the pilot-house upon the Sea Serpent's foredeck. He was no other than Frank Reade, Jr.

Then from the tugboat there came aboard two men.

One was tall and good looking, with light hair and comely complexion.

His companion was as comical a looking specimen of humanity as ever one set eyes upon.

Barney and Pomp exchanged twinkling, mischievous glances as they saw him.

He was tall and lanky, with sharp, cadaverous features, and keen, shrewd, twinkling eyes of gray.

His yellow hair fell down carrotty-like upon his shoulders. He wore a pointed chin whisker and carried a luxurious quid of tobacco in one cheek.

His garments were of the eccentric pattern, to say the least.

His coat was of the swallow-tail pattern, and of blue broadcloth, but faded and worn. Brass buttons adorned it. A vest of variegated pattern and long-striped trousers fastened underneath, cowhide boots with straps, completed the outfit.

He carried a carpetbag of the old-fashioned kind, and an umbrella which would have served for a tent.

He cast a contemptuous glance at Barney and Pomp, who tipped him the wink.

The two servitors of Frank Reade, Jr., were as fun-loving rogues as ever the sun shone on.

"Golly!" muttered Pomp, treading unnecessarily hard upon Barney's toe, "if we don' hab some fun wif dat chile, den I ain' a nigger, dat am all."

"Be jabbers, yez are roight we will," whispered Barney. "Whist, now, n' wud yez luk at the sthoyle av him?"

They, both jolly rascals, chuckled with suppressed glee and satisfaction.

CHAPTER II.

GREENBUSH AND HIS MS.

The tall, blond young man walked straight up to Frank Reade, Jr., and extended his hand.

"Ah, Mr. Reade, you see I am right on hand by appointment."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Jack Wallis."

"And here is my friend, Mr. Hank Greenbush, of Scillyville, N. H. Mr. Greenbush has served one term in the Granite State Legislature, and his distinguishing mark is a bill which he successfully railroaded through the House for the establishing of guide boards upon all public highways in his State. Mr. Greenbush is honored by your hospitality."

"Mr. Greenbush is very welcome," said Frank, catching the roguish twinkle in young Wallis' eye. "Glad to meet you, sir!"

Hank dropped his carpetbag and crushed Frank Reade, Jr.'s hand almost to a pulp in his horny paw.

"Gol durned glad tew make yure acquaintance, Mister

Reade," he said, nasally. "Gosh blow me fer a cantankerous yaller dawg if yew ain't got a fine kind of a boat yer tew be sure!"

"Yes," said Frank, extricating his hand with a grimace. "I think the Sea Serpent is as good a thing for the kind as floats."

"Jerusha an' hemlock boughs! I should say so." He swept a keen, critical glance about. Then, diving deep into his pocket, he brought up a mammoth hunk of plug tobacco. "Durn my socks, have a chew?"

"No, thanks," said Frank, politely. "I don't chew. But come into the cabin, gentlemen, and we will talk business."

"That is agreeable!" cried young Jack Wallis. "Come on, Hank, you old hayseed!"

Greenbush was tugging at a mouthful of the plug, but he followed the others, only pausing at the threshold to look back and give Barney and Pomp, who were laughing at him, a glowering look.

Frank led the way into the cabin.

Upon a table lay a pile of charts and papers and some nautical instruments.

Frank was about to indicate chairs to his visitors.

But young Wallis looked about him admiringly, and said:

"Upon my word, Frank, before we begin business I would like to take a look over your boat."

"With pleasure," said Frank, readily. "Come this way."

The two visitors were shown the cabin, which was furnished with the sumptuousness of a king's palace.

Rich furniture, fine carpets, costly tapestries and gilt trimmings made the place look beautiful indeed.

There were shelves of rare and valuable books set in the walls. Costly chandeliers with electric globes were plenty.

And at intervals there was a queer-shaped silver piece like the mouth of a bell projecting from the wall.

Seeing Wallis looking inquiringly at these, Frank said:

"I will explain those: When under water, of course, we would very quickly exhaust our supply of air. Now, I have the secret of the chemical manufacture of pure air which comes into the cabin in great quantities through these tubes."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Wallis, "but what becomes of the vitiated air?"

"It naturally goes up to the ceiling. Then at intervals there are small electric lobes, with little air sponges, which absorb and consume the impure air as fast as it comes in contact with it."

Jack Wallis scratched his head.

"I never heard of your equal," he said, positively, "there is no conundrum too great for you to tackle. Nothing too difficult for you to solve."

"You are too effusive in your conclusions," said Frank, modestly.

"I mean every one of them!"

They now passed into the staterooms.

Luxurious bunks were here, provided with all the accessories of a toilet.

Beyond were Barney and Pomp's rooms, and then came the dining-cabin and the galley or cook room.

Beyond these were the engine-rooms.

Below all was the reservoir or sinking tank. Into the engine-room they passed.

Here were powerful dynamos operated by a new chemical storage system, which was a secret of Frank Reade, Jr.'s.

The delicate electrical machinery was a source of great wonderment.

Just forward of this were the two guns upon either side of the boat's hull.

There were nothing more nor less than two long, heavy steel pneumatic tubes, with electric connections, and throwing a projectile of dynamite specially prepared by Frank Reade, Jr.

Young Wallis was dazed by all this exhibition of inventive genius.

He was chatting with Frank Reade, Jr., when suddenly from the engine-room there came a terrific crash and a yell of agony.

"What's up?" gasped Wallis.

Both rushed into the chamber.

The sight which met their gaze was a most astonishing one.

There, in a paralyzed heap in the corner, lay Hank Greenbush. He pulled himself together like a jumping-jack and with the most astonished expression upon his face that one could imagine.

"Jerusha hot cakes!" he gasped, "I'd like tew hev yew tell me haow in durnation I fell down that way?"

"Fell down!" exclaimed Wallis. "Was that what you did? Why, we thought the boat had been struck by cannon ball?"

But Frank Reade, Jr., guessed the truth at once.

"Did you come in contact with any of the machinery?" he asked.

"What dew yew say?" asked Hank, ruefully.

"Did you put your hands on any part of the machinery?"

"Gol blast it! What harm cud thet dew, anyway?"

"A good deal."

"But 'tain't goin'."

"That don't make no difference. Certain parts of it are charged with electricity. What did you put your hands on?"

Hank pointed to one of the highly polished discs.

Frank and Wallis looked at each other, and then roared with laughter.

Hank at first looked foolish, and then angry.

"Wall, gosh darned if I kin see anything so very funny about that," he declared.

"Why, that disc is charged with electricity!" cried Wallis.

"Oh, you're a greeny, you are!"

Greenbush glared at the two laughing men a moment, then his anger got the best of him.

Gol blasted if the condemned thing wull sting me agin!"

He roared, catching up a heavy hammer near.

He made a terrific blow at the disc. A cry of horror came from Frank's lips. He expected to see it shattered and the machinery ruined.

But it stood the blow, and the current rushing into the coils of the hammer gave Hank Greenbush another shock which lifted him up and deposited him this time more heavily than before in the corner.

He was completely stunned him, and for a time he was satisfied to sit still and make no remarks whatever.

Frank quickly examined the disc, and seeing that it was all right, he shut a steel screen down over the machinery.

"That was a narrow escape," he declared. "We would have been obliged to abandon our trip for awhile if that had been broken."

"And all for that greenhorn's temper!" cried Wallis angrily.

"Come, get up, you greeny, and get out of here!"

Hank Greenbush was a very much abashed man as he stumbled to his feet.

He had nothing to say, and meekly followed the others out of the cabin.

"Now," said Frank Reade, Jr., sitting down to a table; "let us proceed to business."

"Good!" cried Wallis. "Come, Greenbush, we want your story and your papers."

"All right, fellers," said the countryman, drawing a large-looking bundle of manuscript from his pocket. "Here it is, an' if yew kin read ther blamed stuff yew kin read more than I kin, b'gosh!"

"Where did you get it?" asked Frank, briefly, as he laid the ancient papers out upon the table.

Hank ejected a quid from his mouth into the nearest corner.

"I reckon that I kin tell yew purty quick," he said, hitching at his trousers. "Yew see, thar was Melindy Ann McGee, she wuz second cousin tew my Aunt Jemima's stepmother, an' she married a Potts, an' Potts he was a half brother to my own father's nephew, an' he was cousin of a feller named Jones. Waal, people thought it warn't safe fer me tew marry Jerusha because we wuz so mighty close related, they say thar ain't luck at all in rellytives a-marrying. But I loved Jerusha, an' we went an' got hitched up!"

Hank paused a moment to get breath.

Frank and Wallis looked aghast.

"Look here, Green!" said Wallis, abruptly. "What relation were you then to your wife Jerusha?"

"What relashin wuz I tew my wife Jerusha?"

"Yes."

Hank looked pityingly at the other.

"Why, I wuz jest a-tellin' ye," he said. "Thar wuz Melindy Ann McGee, she wuz second cousin tew my Aunt Jemima's stepmother, an' she married a Potts——"

"Hold on!" broke in Wallis. "Don't go over it again. What I want to know is, what relation was your wife to you before you were married?"

"Eh?"

Wallis looked desperate.

"You heard what I said."

Hank's eyes twinkled.

"'Tain't no proper question tew ask a man," he said. "Of coorse she wuz my best gal."

Frank Reade, Jr., almost rolled out of his chair with laughter at this, and Wallis collapsed.

"Next," he said, turning to Frank.

The young inventor recovered, and then adjusted the matter by saying:

"Well, we won't go closely into the matter of relationship; the question is, Hank, where did you get these papers?"

Hank drew a deep breath.

"Waal, tew cum tew ther p'int, them papers hev been in our family ever since the days of Paul Jones an' ther Bon Homme Richard, b'gosh! My gran'father's brother was acquainted with a midshipman on board of thet ship, an' he give them tew my gran'father. We've hed 'em ever since. I'll be gol blasted if I kin tell yew any better than thet!"

"That is good enough, Hank!" declared Frank. "Let us read the papers."

Frank studied over the almost illegible chirography for some moments, and then went on to read:

"ON BOARD THE BON HOMME RICHARD, 17th July, 18—: Latitude, 10 degs. 20 mins. south; longitude, 140 degs. 7 mins. west. Fired into a pirate ship and sunk it with all hands on board. The pirate was commanded by a cut-throat Italian, Luigi Vespasio. No quarter was given.

"At four bells the masthead watch gave warning of a sail. All hands were called to quarters, and Commander Jones held the Richard down for a distant sea fight.

"Two ships were fighting desperately. One was evidently a pirate, and the other a fine packet ship. Before we reached the spot the packet went down and was seen no more. Only one of her crew was rescued.

"He was the purser, David Medina, a Portuguese. He told the awful story of the fate of the Donna Isabella, one of the finest Spanish traders that ever sailed the sea.

"The Isabella carried a vast treasure from the Incas Mines of Peru, and was going across the Pacific to Australia, and thence to Spain. The treasure aboard the Isabella was estimated at several million dollars. But it is now buried in the sea.

"There was much talk on the Bon Homme Richard of sending down divers. But this was abandoned, and a storm coming up were were obliged to leave. But there the treasure lies to this day.

"To raise it ought not to be a hard job. It does not lie in deep water, and the bottom is sandy and coral in formation. Whether it will ever be found or not is hard guessing. This is the log of the ship Richard, written correctly by

"WILLIAM VANCE, Seaman."

Here the journal closed, and as Frank ceased reading a silence fell upon all.

One moment Frank held the parchment critically in his hand. Then he said:

"Really, Wallis, this does not seem a fraud. The paper seems authentic enough, and I see no reason why we should not believe it."

"Good!" cried Wallis, with joy-flushed face. "I thought you would look at it this way, Mr. Reade."

"Yes. I believe it is a true story, and I see no reason why we cannot find the wreck of the Isabella, and even at this late day recover the sunken gold from the ocean depths. At least, we will try."

CHAPTER III.

THE REPORTER'S VISIT.

All cheered Frank Reade, Jr.'s last declaration.

Jack Wallis was especially pleased, and cried:

"It will make us all rich. We are sure to succeed. Ha! Greenbush, you are a lucky man, and it was a fortunate day for you when you brought me that MS."

"B'gosh, I allus knew it wud amount tew somethin' said Hank, going for his tobacco plug again.

"So, this is the whole story," said Frank Reade, Jr. "and this, friend Wallis, is why you wanted me to meet you at this place?"

"It is," replied Jack. "I felt sure that you would agree to undertake this mission."

"It offers me diversion and of a remunerative kind," said Frank.

"Then you will go?"

"Yes."

Jack Wallis executed a triumphant dance. Hank Greenbush grinned.

"How soon will we be able to start, Frank?" asked young Wallis.

"I see no reason why we cannot start at once."

"Good!"

"The Sea Serpent is equipped for a long cruise, with plenty of provisions and stores. Are you ready?"

"I can be in an hour's time, or as soon as my luggage and Hank's can be brought from the shore."

"Send for it at once."

"I will."

This ended the confab.

It was all settled that the Sea Serpent should go in quest of the sunken gold.

This meant a long cruise to the South Pacific, and without doubt, would be attended with no end of thrilling adventures.

As young Wallis appeared on deck preparatory to going ashore, a small tug approached the Sea Serpent.

Upon the bow of the boat there stood a tall, dark-tinted man.

He had a note-book in his hand, and was writing in it.

As the tug was about to come alongside, Frank Reade, Jr., cried:

"Barney, allow nobody to come aboard!"

"All roight, sor," replied the Celt, as he sprang forward.

Frank at once guessed the man to be some sort of a newspaper reporter, who was anxious to get aboard and make a report for his paper.

The young inventor disliked notoriety above all things.

This was why he commanded Barney to prevent any stranger from coming aboard.

Barney was never delinquent.

The Celt at once rushed to the rail, and shouted:

"Whist there! Kape away from here or it'll be the se for yez. Bad luck to ye fer yez impudence!" But the tug glided close up to the Sea Serpent until not ee feet separated them.

There was for a moment imminent danger of a collision, the pilot of the tug managed to dexterously sheer off. But as the two boats came so near together the fellow on tug leaped instantly to the Sea Serpent's deck. There he stood, note-book and pencil in hand. The fellow's effrontery in thus daring to board the submarine boat angered Frank very much.

Barney made a dash for him as if to throw him overboard.

"Phwat the divil do yez want on board this boat?" he asked. "Luk at the cheek of yez. I've a moind to trow ye overboard."

"Easy, my friend," said the fellow with the brassy cheek, "n't get excited, I pray you. I mean no harm."

"Phwat do yez want?"

"I would like to see Mr. Frank Reade, Jr."

Barney drew himself up.

"Phwat do yez want wid him?" he asked, tersely.

"Give him this card."

The fellow handed Barney a bit of pasteboard. Frank, looking up at this moment took it from his hand and looked at it.

Then his lip curled.

"That was as he thought."

The name upon the card was:

SIDNEY FIELD,

Correspondent and Reporter for the
Associated Press.

"Well, sir," said Frank, with dignity; "please state your business."

"Mr. Reade," said the fellow, with a suave bow, "there's a report going around that you intend making a cruise in an electric submarine boat. As you see, I represent the

"I would humbly beg permission, in the interests of thousands of readers, to inspect your boat and its wonderful appointments."

"I am not anxious to be advertised," said Frank, coldly. "But I ask the favor!"

"I have refused many. Besides, I don't like your man's procedure in boarding my vessel in this way."

"Well," said the reporter, with a smile; "I will allow that I am more persistent than polite, perhaps. But it is customary to put off the reporter that the world would be hard with news if we were not a bit intrusive."

Frank hesitated a moment.

Then relaxing his grimness a bit, he said:

"Very well. You may take a brief look over the boat. Pomp, show the gentleman about. Only fifteen minutes will be allowed."

"A'right, Marse Frank."

And Pomp proceeded to obey orders.

But Wallis looked keenly at the fellow, as did Hank Greenbush, and the former said:

"Upon my word, Frank, he is the picture of a fellow who had a room next to us at the Charleston Hotel, all except the color of hair."

"Well, let him look about," said Frank. "I will soon get rid of him."

"You are the master. I will go ashore and get my rig and return as quickly as possible."

"All right."

Wallis and Greenbush stepped into their tug, which slipped away and started for the town.

The reporter's tug now lay alongside.

A short while later Pomp and the newspaper man came on deck.

He had covered many pages of his note-book, and, advancing to Frank, said:

"I want to thank you, Mr. Reade, for your courtesy. It is a wonderful craft that you have here."

"It is so considered," replied the young inventor.

Then he was deeply impressed with the peculiar light in the keen, penetrating eyes of the fellow.

He experienced something like a chill. But this was increased to a sense of apprehension and wonderment by a startling discovery which he now made.

The fellow had turned to enter the tug alongside.

As he did so, Frank's scrutinizing gaze caught sight of a break in the curious yellow hair which covered his head.

In a moment he understood the situation.

The fellow wore a wig.

It was an astounding revelation, for it betrayed the fact that he was disguised. But for what purpose?

Frank was so startled and mystified by the discovery, that he remained for some moments standing where he was, quite motionless.

The fellow leaped into the tug, waved his hand in adieu, and was off.

The young-inventor was aroused by Barney, who said:

"If yez please, 'Misther Frank, it's a quare chap that was."

Frank turned quickly.

"Did you think that, Barney?"

"Shure an' I did, sor."

"I thought the same."

Barney shook his head knowingly.

"Divil a bit av a newspaper reporter was he. Ther's me sister Cordalier's own son as is reportin' fer the New Yorruk Howler an' Growler, an' shure he's nuthin' loike him at all. Divil a bit av it."

Frank looked quizzically at Barney.

The Celt was tapping his kinky red locks.

"Did yez luk at the hair av him, Misther Frank? Shure it was ivery bit false. Divil a reporter was he!"

Frank drew a deep breath.

"I agree with you, Barney," he said, "but what does the fellow want here?"

"Shure, an' I don't know, sor."

Frank went about his duties, but for the next hour he could think of little else but the bogus reporter.

Barney and Pomp were both satisfied that he was a fraud.

But what mystified Frank was what his purpose was in visiting the Sea Serpent.

"Phwat did he do all the toime yez were showing him about, naygur?" asked Barney.

"He jes' took in eberyting an' wrote it down in a book," replied the darky.

Frank kept a sharp watch for the return of Wallis and Greenbush, for he was anxious to leave at once.

But the two hours passed, and even a third.

It was now quite dusk.

But at this point the tug was seen approaching in the distance.

In due time it ranged alongside, but no Wallis or Greenbush made their appearance.

Instead the pilot handed Frank a letter. Breaking the seal, he read:

"DEAR MR. READE: I am unavoidably detained until morning. I will then be on hand at an early hour. Regretting the delay, I am,

"Yours always,

"JACK WALLIS."

Frank was disappointed, but there was nothing else to do but to make the best of it.

Darkness settled down thick and fast. Frank sat up in the cabin until a late hour, engaged in writing.

Barney was in the pilot-house cleaning up the brasses and Pomp was in the galley making bread.

While engaged thus, none in the cabin or on board the

Sea Serpent observed a small boat which was rowed quite close to the rail of the Sea Serpent.

Three men were in the boat.

They were darkly muffled, and one of them carried something, which he affixed to the rail of the submarine boat.

Then one of the men at the oars whispered softly:

"All right, Wesley?"

"Yes."

"Is it good and firm?"

"It is."

"Let out the wire."

While the boat was rowed away one of the men in the stern began to pay out a light wire, which seemed to extend to the hull of the Sea Serpent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPLOSION.

Barney was working away assiduously in the pilot-house when a bright thought came to him.

Barney and Pomp, while the best of friends, were always playing practical jokes upon each other.

Sometimes one came out victorious and jubilant, sometimes the other.

However it was, both enjoyed the fun immensely.

Pomp had a few days before given Barney a cold shower bath while in his bunk by means of a hose nozzle, so placed in an open port by his bunk, that the Celt had fancied it sprang from the heavy sea, and only discovered his mistake when he got up to shut the port.

Barney had not forgotten this.

It had long been rankling in his bosom, and he was determined to, if possible, get square with his tormentor.

Now a brilliant idea came into his head, and he was determined to put it into execution.

He instantly dropped his scouring material and proceeded to execute his plans. These were somewhat elaborate.

The Celt grinned all over his face as he reflected upon the surprise party he would give his colleague.

"Be jabers, it'll be a good wan on him," he muttered. "Shure, it'll be a number av days, I reckon, afore iver he'll thry any more roasts on me!"

Barney knew that Pomp, like all of his class, was superstitious and mightily afraid of ghosts.

To work upon the darky's superstitious fears was now the wicked Celt's design.

Quickly Barney went into the chemical room and began work.

He proceeded to first cover his face with white chalk. Then he rubbed in some phosphoric oil, an invention of Frank Reade, Jr.'s, which had the peculiar property of being intensely luminous in the dark.

Sheets were procured and covered with the same. Thus fired, Barney looked like an incarnation from Hades, or the disembodied spirit from some ghoul-haunted graveyard.

The chemical room was connected with the galley by a passage.

In this passage was the electric meter by which Barney knew that he could turn off the light in that part of the ship.

All was ready.

The Celt stepped out into the passage and instantly shut off the current from the galley illuminators.

Of course the place was instantly shrouded in darkness. The result was that Pomp began to yell furiously at the top of his voice:

"Who done turn off dat light? Hi, dar, yo' fool I'ishman! If dat am yo', jes' turn dat on again, or I put a lead on yo'! Hear mah gentle voice?"

"Be jabbers, I hear it!" chuckled Barney.

Then he lowered his voice to his boots, and let out a sepulchral groan.

Pomp was coming out of the galley.

He was groping his way along when suddenly he came face to face with the ghostly apparition.

And a ghostly one it truly was.

In the darkness the phosphorus shone like the evanescent flames of a monster ignis fatuus. The darky halted.

Barney let out a hideous groan.

The effect was fearful. A yell like that of a lost spirit rolled from the throat of the terrified darky.

"Massy Lordy! Golly, golly sakes alibe!" he shrieked.

"Se done got mah call, an' dis am de end ob Pomp. Oh, stah Ghosteses, don' take dis chile yit, fo' de Lor's sake n't tech me. I do anyfin' fo' yo' if yo' jes' lemme lib!"

"Boo-oo-oo!" said Barney, in sepulchral tones.

Pomp nearly had a fit.

In the frenzy of the moment he made a backward leap to the galley.

He had no thought but that of escape.

Just over the cooking table there was a dead-eye window. This was open, and Pomp made a bolt for it.

It was quite a respectable sized orifice, but Pomp was almost as broad as he was long.

The result was natural enough. The darky's body would not pass all the way through.

He stopped just at his waist, and to get further was a sheer impossibility.

Had he been able to get through the window it would have been to fall into the sea.

But he did not mind this, for he could swim like a fish.

But there he stuck, fast in the window. All his efforts to get through were vain. It was too much for Barney.

Forgetting his ghostly propensities and qualities he gave way to uproarious laughter.

He ran forward and began to claw the darky's legs. This convulsed Pomp, who was sure that his end had come and that the bad spirit had him.

Sure until he heard Barney's shrieks of laughter.

Then like a flash the truth dawned upon him. He was the maddest darky on earth with that revelation.

"Golly fo' glory! I done kill dat I'ishman!" he gritted.

He began now to work his way back through the dead-eye. But Barney was not yet through with him.

It was too excellent an opportunity, and the Celt, seizing a strip of board, began to belabor the darky's hinder part in right royal fashion.

For half a minute Pomp suffered.

Then out from the dead-eye, like a cork from a champagne bottle he popped, with disheveled appearance and blood in his eye.

Barney was by no means a hog. He had enough, and was content now to abandon the field the quickest possible way.

Shrieking with laughter, he ran out into the corridor, tearing off his ghostly apparel as he went.

But, quick as he was, Pomp was after him. The darky overtook him and clinched with him.

One moment they swayed in the struggle. How it would have terminated it is impossible to say.

But at that moment there was a sudden, terrific explosion.

It was a roar like that of thunder, and the Sea Serpent seemed being rent to pieces.

The two rollicking servitors were tumbled end over end.

When they regained their feet forgotten was everything else in the thrilling exigencies of the moment.

Frank Reade, Jr., had been hurled across the stateroom by the shock. When he recovered he rushed out upon deck.

The Sea Serpent was rolling in a tossing, heaving sea of waters. Frank rushed to the rail and looked over.

He saw the side of the boat was a trifle dented, and that a section of the railing was gone.

What did it mean?

Had there been a collision? Had they been run down?

But if so, the other vessel was not in view. Had it sunk?

But something hanging over a portion of the dismantled railing caught Frank's eye.

He went forward and picked it up.

It was a wire.

Instantly a premonition of the truth flashed across the young inventor. He was intensely excited.

He rushed to the pilot-house and turned on the searchlight.

Over the decks it traveled, and then out upon the surface of the sea and to the shore a half mile distant.

And there he saw, drawn up on the sands, a boat, while a number of men were running toward the woods beyond.

Frank instantly understood all.

It had been a diabolical attempt to blow up the Sea Serpent with dynamite. The attempt had failed by rare good fortune.

Frank's horror was only exceeded by his surprise.

Who were the would-be destroyers, and what was their purpose.

Barney and Pomp were now on deck.

A quick examination was made of the boat's hull.

It was dented and somewhat blackened, and some of the railing was blown away. But this was all.

The Sea Serpent and its crew had miraculously escaped a watery grave.

For a time Frank was very angry.

He was strongly inclined to send a dynamite shell after the villains, but he finally decided not to do so.

"Begorra, I thought the divil meant us no good when he came to the Sea Serpent to-day," averred Barney.

Frank's face darkened.

"There is no doubt but that he is the rascal," he declared. "But what on earth was his purpose?"

"Golly! I done fink dar am somefin' wrong," said Pomp. "Mebbe some one hab foun' out jes' whar de Sea Serpent am gwine, an' dey jes' wants to try an' stop it."

Frank Reade, Jr., stopped short in his walk up and down the deck.

"By gracious, Pomp, I believe you're right!" he cried. "And, now I come to think of it I will wager that there was some sort of a scheme to keep Wallis from coming on board last night."

"Begorra, that's just the whole av it!" shouted Barney.

The three looked at each other.

Then Frank nodded his head.

"We will spoil their game!" he declared. "The Sea Serpent is going to the South Pacific, and they cannot prevent it."

It was not much work to repair the damage done to boat.

The railing was not a prime necessity at this part of boat. A little paint would cover the blackened spot, the dent had not resulted in any cracking of the steel plating.

But it certainly had been a very narrow escape for Sea Serpent.

For the rest of the night all remained awake. At intervals Barney kept the searchlight playing across the sea.

But the would-be wreckers did not make another appearance.

The night wore away and morning came. The sun high in air when a tugboat was seen approaching the Sea Serpent.

As it drew nearer Frank saw Wallis and Greenbush at the bow.

A few moments later the tug ran alongside.

The two men leaped out, and the first words of Wallis were:

"Here I am, Frank, according to your instructions!"

"My instructions!" exclaimed Frank; "have you forgotten that you were to be on hand yesterday afternoon to make the start?"

Wallis looked astonished.

"I believed that was the arrangement until I got your note!"

"My note?"

"Yes."

Frank looked surprised.

"What note?" he asked, coolly.

Young Wallis dove deep in his pocket and resurrected an envelope. He handed this to Frank.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE EQUATOR.

Before he even broke the seal Frank Reade, Jr., understood all.

The note which Wallis had received at the Charleston Hotel shortly after his arrival there, read as follows:

"ON BOARD THE SEA SERPENT."

"FRIEND WALLIS: On account of certain arrangements have to make, do not come out to the Sea Serpent before n o'clock to-morrow morning. Be on hand then."

"Yours ever,

"FRANK READE, JR."

Frank drew the bogus letter from his pocket and handed to Wallis.

"Did you write that?" he asked.

Wallis read it.

"No!" he said, in astonishment.

"Neither did I write this."

"They are both forgeries!"

"Yes."

The two young men stood looking at each other for some moments.

Wallis was a trifle pale.

"I don't understand it," he said.

"You will understand better when I tell you that an attempt has been made to blow up this ship."

A great cry escaped Jack's lips. He turned excitedly to Greenbush.

"Hank!" he cried, "I'll bet it's the work of that fellow that roomed next to us at the hotel. He heard our plans, I am confident, for we were not aware that we could be heard in the next room, or that anybody was there, until we heard him moving about."

"B'gosh t'almighty, yew're right!" cried Hank, with inspiration.

"That was the chap, surely," continued Jack. "He was the only one who could have gained any knowledge whatever of our plans."

"What is his game?" asked Frank.

"It is easy to see."

"Of course."

"He overheard us, and has, no doubt, got the bearings copied down. His game is to get in before us. He expected to do this by blowing up the Sea Serpent."

The logic of this conclusion was apparent to all.

It created no little excitement.

"Well," said Frank Reade, Jr., coolly, "the scoundrel failed in his purpose. I don't know who he is, nor what he is, but I can see no possible way that he can do us any harm, now. We need give him no further thought."

"No," agreed Jack, "let the matter drop. As soon as we get our luggage aboard we are ready to go, Frank."

"All right!"

The tug's men put the traps of the two passengers aboard.

Then Frank Reade went into the pilot-house and set the electrical machinery at work.

Out to sea the Sea Serpent put with all speed.

She was as fast as a ghost, and the way she cleaved her way through the rollers was a caution to her namesake.

Soon land faded from sight.

Frank had decided that the nearest way to reach the latitude in question was by way of Cape Horn.

So the Sea Serpent kept on her way southward.

One beautiful day she crossed the Equator. The sea was like glass, one of those calms peculiar to those latitudes being prevalent.

Barney and Pomp were below, Hank Greenbush was sitting by the rail whittling a stick, and Frank and Jack were in the cabin discussing charts, when an unlooked for thing occurred.

The sky began to wax exceedingly yellow and hazy.

Greenbush noted this with some curiosity, but being unfamiliar with the phenomena of equatorial storms did not give the matter much thought.

Thicker grew the haze until the sun was obscured, and a dull, low rumbling like distant thunder came from the horizon.

Then it occurred to the Yankee that a storm was coming.

"Jemima pancakes!" he gasped, "I never seen such a lookin' sky in my life. B'gosh, I think I'd better tell ther cap'en."

But it was at this moment that Frank Reade, Jr., and Wallis came on deck.

A single glance at the sky told both of them the truth.

"Gosh all hemlock!" cried Hank. "What do yew call it, cap'en?"

"A typhoon!" almost shrieked Frank.

Then he started for the pilot-house.

But before he reached it the Sea Serpent was in the jaws of the storm.

Great mountainous waves came rolling over the sea with racehorse speed, and swept completely over the Sea Serpent.

Hank and Wallis gained the cabin just in time.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was half way to the pilot-house.

Had it not been for a stanchion bolt in the deck to which he clung, he would surely have been swept overboard.

But he hung to this with grim resolution until the first blow of the typhoon was passed.

There was an instant's lull, and the boat was caught high upon a great wave.

The time was brief, but in that moment Frank reached the pilot-house.

Barney was clinging to the wheel, it taking all his strength to keep the boat steady.

In a moment Frank was by his side.

"Begorra, Misther Frank!" cried the Celt, "it luks as if we'd go down for shure!"

"That is our only salvation," cried Frank; "turn the tank lever, quick!"

"Do yez mean to sink the boat, sor?"

"Yes; of course."

Barney saw the point at once, which was to descend below the rough water, and thus escape the fury of the storm.

Of course it was a capital idea, and sure to work.

The lever was turned, the tank instantly filled, and the submarine boat went down.

The turning of the lever in opening the tank also closed every air-tight hatch and means of egress to the deck.

But in spite of this quite a lot of water had dashed down the cabin stairs. This, however, did not do much damage.

Down went the submarine boat quickly. Some motion was felt under the surface, but it gradually decreased.

Then Frank opened the valves from the chemical tank which supplied the boat with oxygen.

The Sea Serpent soon had descended to a great depth.

Scarcely any of the storm's motion could be felt now. All had been total darkness for some moments, but Frank now turned on the electric lights.

He turned on the searchlight and sent its rays flashing through the depths.

Marvelous sights were revealed.

Huge fishes were seen scurrying about wildly as the light burst upon them.

The submarine boat was now within twenty feet of the bottom. Frank was agreeably surprised.

It is generally the case that the sea attains great depths at the equator.

But this evidently was a shallow part. Frank allowed the Sea Serpent to descend until it rested upon the bottom.

The scene now baffled description.

The searchlight made the ocean bed as plain as day.

There were vast areas of white sand, with beautiful shells scattered about.

Cliffs and crags of coral were towering in heights over the sand, and these were hung with beautiful sea plants.

The colors of the coral in the electric light were beautiful beyond description.

The voyagers on board the Sea Serpent regarded the scene with interest.

Wallis and Hank, particularly, were interested, the former being unable to restrain his enthusiasm.

"Wonderful," he cried; "how easy it seems to walk there upon those sands, and yet it is impossible."

"Not so," said Frank. "It is not only possible, but easy."

Wallis looked up in surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Frank pointed to a chest in the corner.

"In that are three suits of diving armor," he said. "They are my own invention, and the wearer carries upon his back a reservoir of pure air, which is constantly being replaced by the use of chemicals just over the reservoir. With perfect safety you could remain out there for hours."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Wallis.

"I do."

"It is wonderful, indeed."

"Presently, if you desire, we will take a little trip out."

"I would be delighted."

After making a few arrangements, Frank proceeded to carry out his plan.

Two of the suits were taken out of the chest and the reservoirs filled with new chemicals.

Then each donned a suit, and Frank led the way to the safety vestibule, as it was called, forward.

Into this the two divers stepped.

Frank touched a spring and it began to revolve. As it did so, it also filled with water.

When the chamber had revolved a certain distance, Frank opened a door, and the two divers stepped out upon the deck.

It was a novel sensation, indeed, to Wallis, but he soon became accustomed to it.

His enthusiasm was without bounds. He danced and leaped about in an ecstasy of delight.

Leaving the Sea Serpent the two divers walked away some distance in the glare of the searchlight's pathway.

Almost to the extreme edge of this they went, when Wallis suddenly halted and made an excited gesture.

Frank gazed in the direction indicated.

He saw a startling sight.

There, partly buried in the sand, was an ancient wreck.

The two divers surveyed it a moment, and then Wallis made signs to go and examine it.

Frank was not anxious, yet acceded to the request.

They approached the wreck without any thought of danger.

It was that of a merchant ship of the last century, with hull crumbling in the water and fast going to decay.

Upon the stern was a name which, as near as Frank could make out, was "Helina Christiania."

She was evidently a Swedish craft, and had gone down in a hurricane.

By placing his helmet close to Frank's, Wallis was able to shout:

"Some poor souls bade good-by to life and its joys and cares when that ship went down."

"Quite likely!" replied Frank.

"Shall we go aboard?"

"As you say."

Wallis made a move toward the ship. Suddenly a thrilling thing occurred.

From one of the ports there suddenly darted forth an eel-like form which clutched Wallis.

In an instant the folds closed about him, and he was lifted bodily and flashed out of sight in a twinkling.

Frank stood aghast, looking at the port for a moment unable to act.

He was literally paralyzed with horror, and hardly knew what move it was best to make.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ACCIDENT.

The disappearance of Wallis was so sudden and unexpected that Frank Reade, Jr., was dumbfounded.

When his senses did come to him it was almost too late to act.

But he could not remain idle and know that his friend had gone to such an awful fate.

Horror was no word for the sensation which oppressed him.

He knew not what manner of creature had seized Wallis in his grip.

It might have been a giant cuttle fish or octopus, that dreaded sea-spider, which has been known to drag down ships to the ocean depths.

Yet the fold which had enveloped Wallis seemed more like that of a huge serpent.

Frank was wholly unable to even guess at its nature.

But it was enough to know that his friend was in danger.

Duty and honor demanded that he go to his rescue.

In his belt Frank had an axe with a keen blade.

This he drew out ready for use.

"Beast or devil, whatever it is," he gritted, "I must give it battle."

With this resolution he approached the port.

In an instant, and before he had time to dodge, out darted a huge tentacle and folded itself about him.

Swift as a flash he was swept in through the port.

Into the hold of the ship Frank was carried.

All had been pitchy darkness there but for the electric globes in the helmets of the divers.

These lit up the hold, and Frank beheld a thrilling sight.

In the hold of the wreck there was a monster of the octopus species, yet seemingly possessed of longer arms.

Its huge maw was wide open and waiting for the morsel which it was striving to obtain in the person of Wallis.

But the young voyager was battling with all the fury of a desperate man.

He was doing his best cut off the arm of the octopus with his axe.

Frank Reade, Jr., found himself in precisely the same fix.

He was obliged to struggle just the same. But the octopus now found that he had bargained for too much.

It might have been possible to have devoured one of the victims.

But two of them claimed rather too much of the energy and strength of the monster.

Frank made blow after blow at the powerful tentacle with his axe.

The blood spurted out and colored the water profusely.

Frank saw that if he could sever the tentacle, the chance for escape would be good.

But right in the midst of the struggle his feet slipped and he was drawn almost to the monster's beak.

This was a frightful predicament, and there was but one desperate thing that could be done.

Frank poised his axe and brought it down in a terrific blow upon the monster's head.

The axe crashed through bone and all, and laid open the creature's brain. In a moment it was writhing in a death struggle.

The victory was won.

Frank wielded the axe valiantly until the creature was cut all to pieces. Then both stood free. It had been a narrow escape and a hard struggle.

But they had won.

Wallis put his helmet close to Frank's, and shouted:

"A close call."

"You're right," replied Frank.

"I thought our day had come."

"Yes."

"I do not see much use in remaining here. There is nothing of value on this ship."

"Nothing."

"Let us return then."

"All right."

They climbed out of the port and stood once more upon the bed of the ocean.

They could see the glare of the Sea Serpent's searchlight in the distance. They made their way toward it.

Soon they could see ahead through the glass windows of the submarine boat.

There were Barney and Pomp and Hank Greenbush waiting anxiously for their return.

Reaching the rail of the Sea Serpent they clambered upon the deck.

Then they entered the turret and Frank pressed the spring.

At once it began to revolve. As it did so the water was forced out, and when the vestibule was reached every particle had been pumped out.

Quickly the divers removed their suits. Then, stepping into the vestibule Frank opened a door, and they passed into the cabin.

Barney met Frank eagerly.

"Och hone, Misther Frank!" he cried. "It's bad news I have fer yez!"

"What is it?" asked Frank, sharply.

"Shure, if yez will come wid me I'll show yez."

Frank suffered himself to be led down into the engine-room.

Barney explained quickly that the fine electrical machinery was deranged, and that until it could be repaired the Sea Serpent could not possibly make ten miles per day.

This was most disheartening intelligence. Frank could not express his dismay in words.

"This is too bad!" he declared. "Of course, if I had the boat at Readestown I could soon fix it. But to attempt to do it here will take at least six weeks."

"That is unfortunate. It will delay us greatly," said Wallis.

"Delay us! I should say so. I wouldn't have had it happen for the price of the boat."

"How do you reckon that it happened?"

"It must have been the storm, and possibly the effects of that blow that Hank gave it with the axe."

However, there was no course left but to make the best of it.

If the Sea Serpent was delayed six weeks it meant much.

One and all thought of the possibility of Wesley Hawkins, which was the name of the villain who had tried to blow up the Sea Serpent, as Hank had learned at the

Charleston Hotel, reaching the locality of the sunken gold first.

"All right. If he gets there first let him have it," declared Wallis. "I don't see how he is going to get a ship to go there with, and how he can recover the gold with the ordinary divers."

"We won't worry about it," said Frank, shrugging his shoulders. "There is nothing like making the best of things."

It was decided to return to the surface at once.

It was safe to assume that the storm was over, and all would be safe.

Accordingly this was done.

A calm sea was found, and no trace of the storm, save a distant receding cloud.

The submarine boat was put under slight speed, such as the crippled machinery would bear.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., and Barney and Pomp stripped off their coats and went to work.

Like beavers they toiled for a time. Meanwhile, the Sea Serpent drifted on.

As Frank Reade, Jr., predicted, the job of repairing the machinery was a long one. But there was no other way but to submit.

For days the Sea Serpent drifted on idly. Weeks passed before finally the task was completed.

But at length the work was done, and the laborers rested from their toils.

The machinery was once more all right, and everything was in readiness for a quick trip.

Frank now entered the pilot-house and set the course of the Sea Serpent for Cape Horn.

In due course the rough waters of this locality was reached.

It was a glorious day for the voyagers, when at length the tranquil Pacific was reached.

Frank took his bearings when five days around Cape Horn, and found that they were not above two thousand miles from their destination.

Four days later they began to encounter some of the many small islands which dot the South Pacific.

Lancaster Reef was sighted, and then gradually they began to enter the Great Archipelago.

Every day now they were drawing nearer to their destination.

All were exceedingly enthusiastic, and the time could not pass quickly enough.

One day the Sea Serpent crossed the tropic of Capricorn, and they were now well into the warm seas.

A few days later the Austral Isles were sighted, and now Frank began to take more accurate bearings.

The search for the sunken gold was now begun in real earnest.

Thus far they had sighted but few crafts. But now, while making a small coral atol, Barney, who was the bow watch, cried:

"Sail ho! Shure, Mither Frank, phwhat koind av a craft is it?"

This question might well be asked. Every eye was turned in that direction, and sharp exclamations followed.

The sail was quadrangle-shaped and the craft long, low and rakish.

Instantly Frank Reade, Jr., recognized its character, and he replied:

"It is a Malay vessel."

Jack Wallis gave a start.

"Then it is a pirate!" he cried.

"It may be," said Frank, studying the distant craft with his glass.

The proa, for such it was, seemed to be making directly for the Sea Serpent.

As it did not fly the black flag and had no eternal appearance of piratical sort, Frank could not assume an aggressive attitude.

But he kept a sharp eye on the Malay vessel.

"Why, she is hailing us!" cried Wallis, in surprise.

This was true.

A tall, swarthy fellow, in picturesque costume, stood upon the quarterdeck of the proa, and shouted something in a strange tongue.

Frank could not understand it, but appeared on the bridge of the Sea Serpent, and shouted back:

"Can't you talk English? I don't know your language?"

The fellow answered in Portuguese, which fortunately Frank understood.

"What ship are you?"

"This is the Sea Serpent. Who are you?"

"We are traders. We have opium and rice. Let us come aboard!"

"Stand off!" commanded Frank, sternly.

The proa had darted forward, and seemed about to come alongside in spite of all. Frank saw at a glance danger.

The waist of the proa was filled with villainous-looking men. There was no doubt in the young inventor's mind that they were pirates.

He knew their treachery, and that there was need of caution. Once more he repeated his command in Portuguese: "Stand off!"

CHAPTER VII.

FATE OF THE PROA.

But the oarsmen of the proa did not cease rowing, and the swarthy captain made reply:

"Be not afraid, Tuan (master). We are friends. We only want trade."

"Well, we don't want it," replied Frank, sternly. "Keep off, I say!"

But his words were wasted.

The next moment the proa ran alongside the Sea Serpent, and in a twinkling a score of swarthy Malays sprang over the rail.

Grappling irons were thrown out, and in an instant the Malays threw off their masks.

Creeses flashed from under their cloaks, and with cries they rushed toward the cabin.

All this while Frank had been inactive.

Wallis had caught a spirit of alarm.

"Frank!" he cried, wildly. "Are you going to give the boat up to them?"

"Keep cool," replied the young inventor. "I don't intend to knuckle to them the least particle."

"But they are boarding us."

"That is all right."

"How can you say that?"

"Keep cool and you will see!" replied the young inventor, earnestly.

"I'm sure I cannot see your purpose!"

"Well, you will, presently!"

Over the rail poured the Malays. Half a hundred were on the Sea Serpent's deck.

That was what Frank had been waiting for. The time for action had come.

He pressed a spring which caused all the doors and windows of the Sea Serpent to hermetically close.

Then he pulled open the lever which opened the air chamber.

Water poured in and the Sea Serpent began to sink.

Down she went, and the proa would have gone too had not the grappling irons broken.

The whole half hundred pirates were instantly struggling in the water.

Many were drowned, but some managed to get aboard the proa, which began to scud away toward the distant island.

The astonishment of the Malays to see the submarine boat disappear in that inexplicable manner must have been great.

Evidently they believed the sinking accidental.

But when the Sea Serpent suddenly reappeared, not two hundred yards distant, their amazement increased to terror.

Wallis, who had been so alarmed, now laughed at his alarm.

"What a fool I was!" he cried. "Of course, you had the best of them, Frank."

"Well, rather," said the young inventor, grimly. "Now, I hate to take human life, but these fellows are the scum of the earth."

"That is so."

"It is a blessing to humanity at large to destroy them."

"Certainly."

"I believe I'll do it."

Frank went forward to the gun deck. He trained one of the pneumatic guns, and pressed the electric key.

There was a quick recoil. A distant roar and an enormous explosion. A column of water rose fifty feet in the air.

When it subsided not a vestige was to be seen of the doomed proa, save a small heap of wreckage.

The voyagers all rushed on deck with their glasses.

They studied the sea for some sign of any survivors. A few were seen momentarily on the surface, but they quickly disappeared, with the exception of one man.

This one was seen to be swimming vigorously toward the shore.

The proa had run quite near to the shore of the island, and the pirate was making his best efforts to reach it.

"Upon my word!" cried Wallis, in surprise, "I believe it is the priate captain."

"Begorra, that's who it is," cried Barney. "Shure, wud yez give him a shot, Misther Frank?"

The fellow was easily within rifle shot, but Frank could not bear to think of that.

"No," he said, with compassion. "If the fellow can escape let him do so."

The voyagers watched the swimmer with interest.

He actually succeeded in reaching the shore, and climbed out upon a shelf of rock.

There he stood erect, and in a seeming frenzy of rage made mad gesticulations at the submarine boat.

"That is hardly good taste," said Wallis. "We just spared his life."

"Yes," agreed Frank. "But we blew his ship all to pieces."

However, no further time was wasted in the vicinity.

As the Sea Serpent rounded the island, however, all were surprised to see a number of the Malay proas in a small bay or harbor.

They did not venture to attack the Sea Serpent.

Frank, however, studied them with interest.

"Well, this is queer!" he muttered. "It must be a rendezvous for them."

"That is about so," said Wallis.

However, the young inventor could see no good reason for attacking the pirates, so the Sea Serpent kept on.

Various other islands were now encountered.

Some of them were plainly inhabited by natives, but there was no sign of white men.

Frank troubled none of them, and kept his bearings for the reef where the sunken gold was to be found.

The young inventor now began to grow more deeply interested in the project.

As they hourly drew nearer to the spot the spirits of all rose, and much excitement prevailed.

At length Frank announced that they ought to sight the reef the next day.

An hour later a terrific storm came up.

It was a genuine South Sea hurricane. An ordinary ship would have fared hard in its grasp.

But the Sea Serpent had only to sink below the surface and thus escape it.

For several hours the storm raged.

It was morning of another day before the Sea Serpent was able to proceed.

The sea yet ran high, but gradually grew more calmer, until near noon they lay off the shore of an island.

Then Pomp, who was on deck, raised the cry:

"Wreck ahoy! Jes' come up yer as quick as yo' kin, Marse Frank."

"What is the matter?" cried Frank, tumbling out on deck.

"Look fo' yo'se'f, sah."

Frank did look in the direction indicated.

He was dumbfounded.

There, high upon a treacherous reef, not half a mile from the shore of a tropical isle, was the hull of a fine steam yacht.

The vessel had apparently been driven there by the recent storm, and was a hopeless wreck.

The yacht resembled closely the pleasure craft of a

healthy American, save that she was large and carried several rifled guns.

"Great Heavens!" cried the young inventor, "she is a wreck. Are any of the crew alive?"

"Suah, sah, I don' see none ob dem nowhar," replied Pomp.

"Begorra, maybe they are in the cabin," cried Barney.

"That is logic!" cried Wallis. "Hail her, Frank."

This was done.

But no reply was accorded the hail. Here was a mystery. What did it mean?

Had all the crew gone down in that awful storm? There was no doubt but that this looked to be a lamentable fact.

However, Frank Reade, Jr., was not satisfied with this.

For aught they knew there might be some of the crew in the cabin in an exhausted condition.

Unable to answer the hail they might perish there.

There seemed but one course to pursue. This was to visit the yacht.

As it was hardly safe for the Sea Serpent to approach so near to the reef a small boat was put out.

Into this there got Barney and Frank and Jack Wallis.

They rowed quickly to the side of the yacht.

Frank went over the rail, and Wallis followed.

The name on the yacht's bow was "Penguin," S. Y. C., Charleston, S. C.

"What do the letters mean?" asked Wallis, in surprise.

"S. Y. C.?" exclaimed Frank. "Why, Southern Yacht Club, of course. This boat is one of the club fleet."

"What is she doing away down here?"

Then both paused and looked keenly at each other.

The same thought was in the minds of both.

"By jove!" gasped Wallis, "do you see any significance in it, Frank?"

"It looks queer," agreed the young inventor. "It may not be so."

"I will bet my life on it."

"Let us wait."

Lashed to a broken stump of a mast was a dead seaman.

Two more dead bodies were found upon the deck.

One of the boats was stove in and the other was gone.

There were appearances that the survivors had hastily taken their departure from the yacht.

"They may have got safely to shore," said Frank. "Let us look in the cabin."

All were willing to do this.

Down the cabin stairs they went. Everything was upside down, but no sign of the former occupants was to be seen.

Frank looked about sharply for the yacht's log.

This was found intact in a niche in the cabin partition.

Opening the pages, Frank read what was an astounding revelation to all.

Under date of three months past was the following:

"To-night we made an attempt to blow up the Sea Serpent, but it failed. In some way we must beat her to the latitude in which the sunken gold lies. Wesley Hawkes is the discoverer of the mighty secret.

"Occupying a room at the Charleston Hotel, next to that occupied by two men named Greenbush and Wallis, he heard the great secret of the hidden wealth and its location.

"We know that the wealth belongs no more to them than to us. The one who reaches it first shall claim it lawfully.

"There we are decided to beat them, and for this purpose I take my fast yacht, the Penguin. It is not known that I, Harold Chester, of the rich Chester family, of Charleston, stands upon the brink of financial ruin. But such is the case, and if I can only secure this sunken treasure I may reclaim my social standing and position. This I shall hope to do."

Frank read all this, which was much in explanation of what had occurred in the past.

Then he went on with the rest of the log.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MALAY TOWN.

There was much data as to weather observations, and the usual routine of the voyage.

Frank passed hurriedly over this.

He then came to the end of the log where the most interesting entry of all was made.

"We have been driven upon a reef by a storm. A coral island lies near. It looks as if the Penguin is doomed unless we can get her off.

"Two hours later: The Penguin is going to pieces. Only four of us are left alive. Wesley Hawkes, myself and two seamen. We are just about to leave the yacht. God have mercy on us."

Here the log ended.

For some moments after finishing it, Frank Reade, Jr., was silent.

Then Wallis said:

"Well, friends, it looks bad for us all, don't it? We have got to fight against those fellows."

"What harm can they do us?" asked Frank, incredulously.

But Wallis shook his head.

"More than any of you think of," he declared. "That Hawkes is a schemer, and he will devise some method to harm us."

"There is no doubt but that they are now on the island."

"No."

"Then why not go ashore and have a talk with them?"

"What good would it do?"

"We can at least force them to abandon their hostile plans. They will surrender."

But Wallis looked incredulous.

"I don't believe it," he said. "I have no doubt but that they will contrive to give us a good deal of trouble if we attempt to catch them."

"Then what would you advise?"

"Simply that we go on and leave them to their own devices."

But Frank Reade, Jr., could not reconcile himself to this.

The young inventor felt a strong inclination to visit the island.

"I want at least to make sure that they are there," he said.

"Very well," said Wallis, yielding. "I have nothing to say. Of course, you are the boss of the expedition."

And so it was decided.

It was easy to understand how the Penguin had reached these waters in advance of the Sea Serpent.

The six weeks' delay of the submarine boat on the equator accounted for this.

As they came out of the Penguin's cabin, Barney drew the Sea Serpent's boat close to the rail and they were enabled to easily step into it.

"Take us ashore, Barney," directed Frank. "Do you know how to take a boat through the surf?"

"Shure, an' I do that, Misther Frank," declared the Celt. "Don't yez worry a particle about that, now."

And Barney was as good as his word.

He took the boat safely through the line of surf and quickly landed his passengers safely on the island.

In general outline it did not differ much from any of the atolls.

Its formation was principally of coral. Cliffs are along the shore to the height of fifty or sixty feet.

Back of these were jungles and wilds, with forests of palm and banyan, the foliage looking green and beautiful.

Long beaches of smooth and shell-strewn sand extended for miles in either direction.

There was no sign of human life visible.

In the foliage were birds of gorgeous plumage—on the cliffs were great numbers of sea birds.

The explorers gazed upon the scene for some moments in admiration.

"This is a good example of the tropical isle," declared Wallis. "Is it not so, Frank?"

"Yes," agreed the young inventor, "I should say it was. But now the question confronts us—where are our people?"

"Be jabers, av they landed here, there ought to be some sign av their footprints," declared Barney.

"That is so," agreed Wallis. "Let us look for them."

And this was done.

Upon the sand swept by the tide it was, of course, foolish to look for anything of the kind.

But up under the cliffs Barney suddenly found the impressions very accurately made in the sands.

"Whurroo!" he cried. "Shure, an' we'll be afther thrackin' the spalpeens yit. Wud yez luk at this?"

The footprints were quickly examined.

There was no doubt but that they were made by the escaping members of the Penguin's crew.

These were four in number, as seen by the footprints.

"They are Wesley Hawkes, Harold Chester and two sea men," declared Wallis. "All others of the crew have perished."

"That is about the size of it," agreed Frank.

"Shall we return to the Sea Serpent?"

"Wait a bit."

The footprints led up the cliff by means of a narrow path. Frank proceeded to follow this until the summit was reached. Barney and Wallis followed.

Here a more extended view of the interior of the island could be had.

And as Frank swept it with his keen eye he was given a sudden start.

There in a small bay at the upper end lay a number of vessels, which even at that distance he could see were Malay proas.

Fully twenty of them lay anchored there, and indeed, as the young inventor continued to study the distant scene, he saw also that the shore was dotted with huts.

The voyagers exchanged surprised and startled glances. "Upon my word!" cried Wallis. "It is a Malay settlement."

"A sort of pirates' stronghold," muttered Frank. "Look, they have a fort erected there."

"That is so."

"Beggorra, there must be a thousand or more av them in there!" cried Barney.

"Oh, yes," agreed Frank. "That intensifies the importance of our getting hold of the sunken gold as quickly as possible."

"That is so," agreed Wallis, "but I have a proposition."

"What is it?"

"Now that we have come this far it is too bad to turn back without knowing more of the pirates and their stronghold. I move that we make a little scouting trip up around that quarter."

"All right," agreed Frank with alacrity. "You have my ideas exactly."

No time was wasted.

Cautiously the three adventurers made their way through the undergrowth.

All manner of curious birds were scared from the bushes, and at times a rabbit or some small animal would scurry past.

But no sign of human life was encountered until they had reached a spot quite near to the Malay town.

Here the utmost caution was employed.

A small eminence near was selected as a point of outlook, and to this they crept.

Here a wide view of the place could be had.

And it was a wonderful sight.

The Malay town was quite respectable in size, with many scores of huts made from leaves of the plantain and palm.

But the fort, quite a substantial structure, was made of stone, and several cannon were mounted upon it.

The sandy beach was strewn with boats, and in the harbor were a whole fleet of proas and many-oared prohus.

The town presented a picturesque, and in many respects, beautiful appearance.

The bright colors worn by the Malay women shone resplendent in the tropical sun.

The picturesque natives themselves lounged about the doors of the palm-thatched huts.

Suddenly a great stir was created.

Into the village there came bounding a number of Malays, with excited cries and gesticulations.

Then there was beating of drums and blowing of horns,

and a large crowd of Malay fighting men came out of the forest.

"Look!" cried Wallis, with a sharp cry, "there are our men!"

Sure enough, prisoners in the midst of the Malays, were four white men.

Two of them our adventurers easily recognized as Hawkes and Chester, and the others as seamen.

They had fallen into the hands of the Malays.

This was not a fate to be much desired, as all knew. The South Sea Malay is a robber and a cut-throat by nature.

If they were not put to death the prisoners would be almost sure to be put into the galley as slaves.

The prisoners were instantly surrounded by a vast mob of the Malays.

"That is the end of them," said Wallis, "there is no danger of their interfering with us now."

"Be jabbers, that's thrue," said Barney.

"Indeed, I feel sorry for them!" exclaimed Frank. "I don't know but that we ought to try and rescue them."

"Misplaced pity!" declared Wallis, earnestly; "they would turn around and cut our throats for it."

"You may be right," agreed Frank, "but look, now."

Suddenly, as if owing to some explanation, the bonds of the prisoners were cut, and they were seen to mingle in a friendly manner with the Malays.

The tall, dark chief, or head man of the tribe seemed to have been the cause of this.

The Sea Serpent's crew were amazed.

"How do you explain that?" asked Wallis, in mystification.

"There is only one way!" declared Frank Reade, Jr., "and that is simply that they have in some manner affiliated with the Malays."

Wallis turned and gave Frank a penetrating gaze.

"You are right!" he cried. "Probably to save his life, Hawkes has told them of the sunken gold."

"It looks probable."

"Then——"

"We must go back to the Sea Serpent."

"Wait!" said Wallis, suddenly, as he clutched Frank's arm. "Look at that!"

The young inventor looked in the direction indicated by the other.

He saw the white sails of a ship suddenly appear in the offing. It was plainly a merchant vessel.

Around a headland it glided and came in full view of the Malay town.

The result was electrifying.

The ship's master and crew were probably looking for a harbor, not dreaming that the island was a nest of pirates.

But coming so suddenly upon the unseen danger, the result was thrilling.

Instantly every Malay proa in the harbor began to swing about, and a booming shot went out from the fort.

CHAPTER IX.

ON A SUBMARINE REEF.

The Malays plainly intended to attack the merchant ship.

It looked like a great fat prize dropped right into their very arms. It was certainly a strange situation.

And those on board the merchantman too late saw the terrible trap into which they had dropped.

Instantly the helm was put hard down, the big ship's head came about and new sails were spread.

But as if by some strange fatality all in that moment the wind died out, and a dead calm ensued.

There lay the ship now wholly at the mercy of the pirates.

The oared proas could go anywhere despite a calm.

Therefore the ship was certain to become their prey.

It was like a swarm of bees flocking about a helpless victim. Realizing that they could not escape, the merchant sailors made preparations for defense.

Ringed orders came from her decks, and armed men appeared at the rails.

But what could they hope to do in the face of such odds?

The pirates outnumbered them a hundred to one.

All this while the three men of the Sea Serpent's crew had stood inactive and half dazed upon the hill.

"Great God!" gasped Wallis, finally. "What an awful fate! They are sure to be overwhelmed."

"It is a pack of wolves upon a helpless sheep."

"That is so."

"Be jabbers, I wish I had wan av the electric guns here this minnit!" cried Barney.

"We would soon alter the looks of things," agreed Frank, grimly.

"But what are we to do?" cried Wallis. "Are we to stand here idly?"

"No."

"What shall we do?"

"Back to the Sea Serpent."

"But the ship may be burned to the water's edge before we can get back there."

"No matter," said Frank. "We certainly can render no aid here."

"That is true."

"Be jabbers cum on thin!" cried Barney. "I'll be the first to lead the way."

And the Celt was as good as his word.

Away he went through the jungle. Frank and Wallis followed.

With all haste they crossed the island. But long before they reached the shore the din of the conflict reached their ears, and smoke could be seen in great columns rising in the air.

Gaining the point on the cliffs from which they had first seen the Malay town they looked back.

A startling sight was revealed.

The heavens were black with smoke. It could be seen that the ship had already been looted and was drifting away, a hopeless wreck.

Even as they gazed the fire had reached the water line; there was a lunge and the vessel went down.

The tragedy was over.

The fiendish work was done, and Frank Reade, Jr., realized this painfully. It was too late to do anything now.

No succor could be rendered. The gallant ship was beneath the waves, her crew were murdered and the victorious pirates were bearing their ill-gotten spoils to the shore.

In some far off American port owners would wait in vain for the return of that noble vessel.

Mothers, fathers, sweethearts and wives, dear ones, all would wait and wait with hopes long deferred,

"For the ship

That will never return."

Frank Reade, Jr., Wallis and Barney, all realized this, and their faces darkened.

"Horrible!" gasped Wallis, "that is enough to harrow one's soul."

"They shall atone for the outrage," said Frank, grimly. "I will sweep every one of the dogs from the face of the earth."

Slowly they descended to the beach.

Entering the boat they rode back to the Sea Serpent.

Pomp and Greenbush had been waiting anxiously for them.

"Waal, I'll be gol durned!" sputtered the Vermonter,

"I'm glad ye've got back. We wuz goin' tew swim ashore an' take a look arter ye in harf a jiffy more."

"Golly, I warn't worried not a little bit," declared Pomp. "I jes' know Marse Frank, he take care ob hisse'f an' cum back jes' when he get ready."

An account was given of their experience on shore.

Then plans were discussed.

"I'm mightily in favor of first finding the sunken gold," said Wallis, "and then giving it to the Malays afterward."

"They have sunk an American ship, and must be punished," said Frank, grimly. "However, I believe you're right, Jack. We will first look for the sunken gold."

And so it was decided.

The point where the ancient treasure ship was sunk, as near as could be guessed at by the chart, was at a point three miles distant.

At once the Sea Serpent proceeded thither.

As near as possible the place was located. Then Frank pressed the lever, which caused the submarine boat to sink.

At the same moment he connected the cabin with the chemical air-chamber.

Down went the Sea Serpent.

Frank pressed a spring which caused the slide from every window to fly back and flood the ocean depths with the electric light.

He had not taken the precaution to make soundings, therefore he could only guess at the depth.

But he did not imagine it was more than two hundred feet, and in this he was right.

Down went the submarine boat.

Barney, who was forward, suddenly shouted to Frank: "Be jabbers, I kin see the bottom av the sea!"

At once Frank closed the chamber into which the water was pouring, and the Sea Serpent gently settled down upon the sand.

The searchlight's glare penetrated far and near through the clear waters.

A wonderful scene was revealed.

There were reefs of coral of various colors. Ocean caves and grottoes, cliffs and peaks, valleys and glens.

In and out of these flashed beautiful fish of all colors and many shapes.

It was like a submarine Paradise.

"Oh, to be a merman and live in this beautiful submarine world!" cried Wallis, with inspiration.

"Gosh all Peter!" exclaimed Hank Greenbush, staring at the scene. "I never seen anythin' so purty at a circus."

"Be jabbers, that's a good deal for a hayseed to admit," rejoined Barney.

Everybody laughed at this.

But Frank Reade, Jr., had only thoughts for business. He was anxious to begin work at once.

"Do you see anything of the wreck?" he asked, as he turned the searchlight in every direction.

Everybody looked everywhere, but nothing could certainly be seen of it.

However some of the crags or cliffs of coral might hide it, as Frank knew.

Satisfied that it was not in the near vicinity, Frank went back to the pilot-house.

His plan now was to begin a system of exploration of the ocean bed.

This he went to work at in the manner he deemed best.

The Sea Serpent was elevated to a height of twenty or thirty feet from the bottom of the sea.

Then it went forward at slow speed, while Barney kept the searchlight at work exploring every nook and corner.

This was certainly a prime good idea, and seemed likely to work well.

But an unforeseen calamity suddenly overtook them.

So intent were the voyagers in the quest for the treasure ship that Frank at times narrowly avoided collision with the high, combing coral reefs.

Suddenly a cry pealed from Barney's lips:

"Och hone, Misther Frank! Wud yez luk at the loikes av that?"

Frank did look, and fancied that he saw the outlines of a ship in the distance.

But before he could make sure of this there was a terrific collision, a shock, and everybody was thrown down.

The Sea Serpent was quivering like an aspen as Frank regained his feet.

He sprang to the lever which controlled the rising of the boat, and turned it.

But it would not work.

The reason for it was plainly seen. The Sea Serpent had run bow on into a mass of soft coral.

There it was, wedged a dozen feet in the white mass.

No amount of pressure from the electric engines would cause the Sea Serpent to back off.

She was there almost immovably wedged. It was a hard situation.

Two hundred feet under water and held down by tons of the coral the outlook was indeed tough.

The voyagers looked at each other completely aghast.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Wallis, "we are surely done for this time. We will never get out of here alive."

"It will be all right if the shell of the Sea Serpent is not punctured," said Frank Reade, Jr.

"The shell punctured?"

"Yes."

"What is the result of that?"

The boat would fill with water and we would be drowned like rats in a trap."

"My God!" exclaimed Wallis, aghast. "You don't mean that?"

"Yes; I do."

"But the boat does not seem to be filling."

"Ah! but can't you see that he is wedged into the coral? No water can get into the boat as yet, for the coral would prevent it."

"Ah! I can see it now."

"When the boat is free from the coral the aperture would be exposed, the boat would fill and that would be the end!" All were pallid and terrified.

Hank Greenbush was the coolest of all.

"Gol durned if I believe in stayin' down yer then," he said.

"How are you going to get up?" asked Wallis.

"Where are them 'ere things yew walk out in ther water with?"

"You mean the diving suits?"

"Waal, yes."

"What use are they?"

"Why, dang it, man, kain't yew walk ashore in 'em?"

Everybody smiled at this. But no one felt hilarious.

"There is only one thing to do," said Frank, finally, "and upon that depends the lives of all of us."

"And what is that?" asked Wallis, with deep anxiety.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUNKEN GOLD.

Frank Reade, Jr., was not slow in making his reply.

"There is just this chance," he said, "the shell may not be punctured."

"Is it likely?" asked Wallis.

"It is a slim chance."

"So I should say."

"That the Sea Serpent should dive her nose so deep into a coral mass as all that without puncturing the hull, does not seem at all likely."

"Yet the ram may have cleared the way."

"It may have. As I say, there are chances. But they are slim."

Wallis walked up and down.

"How are we to know our fate?" he asked, finally.

"We will know it very quickly if the Sea Serpent's head is drawn out from that mass of coral."

"Can that be done?"

"What! Remove the mass of coral from her bow?"

"Yes."

"Of course it can."

"How?"

Frank Reade, Jr., looked quizzically at his interlocutor.

"That is a very simple matter," he said. "I can place a very small dynamite cartridge in there and shake the reef into a thousand pieces. It is very fragile stuff."

"But would not the shock injure the Sea Serpent?"

"Not the least particle."

"Then let us waste no time!" said Wallis, feverishly. "I am anxious to know our fate at once."

"All right," said Frank; "but first I will——"

He did not finish his speech.

At this moment a sharp cry came from Barney.

The Celt had been working the searchlight, and, in exploring the ocean depths with it, had made an astonishing discovery.

Distant not six hundred feet from the reef in which the Sea Serpent was stuck was what looked like another reef.

But as Barney had studied its white outlines, he saw, with amazement, that they were those of a ship.

There it was true to life and complete—hull, masts and rigging. It was a bark of the old style.

"Begorra, wud yez come here an' take a luk at this!" he cried.

In a moment Frank was by his side.

"What is it, Barney?"

"Shure, an' it luks much loike a ship, sor."

Frank held the searchlight upon the object. Then he saw what was certainly a sunken ship, thickly incrustated with coral.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "It is the treasure ship. It is found at last."

The excitement created by this declaration was intense. Forgotten was everything else for the moment, even the position of the Sea Serpent.

"Good!" cried Wallis, excitedly. "There is no doubt but that we have found it, Frank."

"No doubt at all."

"Success is ours!"

Barney and Pomp quickly brought out the diving suits.

It was decided not to attempt to free the Sea Serpent until after a visit had been paid to the wreck.

It was arranged further that Wallis and Frank should visit the wreck first.

The others were to remain aboard the Sea Serpent.

This was most disappointing to Barney and Pomp, who were anxious to accompany their young master.

But like the faithful servants they were, they did not demur.

Equipped in their diving suits, Frank and Wallis left the Sea Serpent.

It was rough work climbing over the coral reef.

But the glare of the searchlight showed them the way, and they kept bravely on.

After awhile they drew near to the coral-incrusted ship.

It lay half buried in the shifting sands.

Hull and spars, and even many of the ropes remained in their original position, though all were thickly incrusting with coral.

It was not a difficult job to climb on deck.

The hatchway was open, and as the explorers drew near to it several large fish darted out of it.

Reaching the edge of the hatch they cautiously knelt down and peered into the hold.

The darkness was in a measure dispelled by the electric lights on their helmets.

The interior of the cabin was plainly seen.

The coral insects had failed to get in their work there.

The woodwork was not much decayed, and, indeed, all was in a remarkable state of preservation considering the length of time it had been under water.

Frank placed his helmet close to that of Wallis', and shouted:

"Shall we go down?"

"Yes."

"Look out for rotten planks."

"All right!"

With this Frank swung over the edge and dropped down through the hatch.

Wallis followed him.

They were now in the cabin of the treasure ship.

That this was indeed the Isabella, they had as yet no proof, but they felt reasonably sure of it.

Passing through the cabin, Frank opened a door, which fell from its rusted hinges.

Upon the floor of the cabin beyond was a ghastly sight.

There, in plain view, was a heap of whitened skeletons, the remains of the poor victims of the shipwreck.

Various other imperishable articles were scattered about.

Old shoe buckles, rusty daggers and swords, and various articles of iron and brass.

Also a few gold coins were picked up. But the explorers did not pause long here.

They passed on and into the magazine.

A pile of blackened stuff which had once been gunpowder was there. Over this they went, and then came to a door which had iron bars before it.

Upon the planks before it lay the skeleton of a man with the steel handle of a halbert yet in his bony fingers.

Both explorers paused.

Frank placed his helmet against Wallis', and shouted:

"The treasure is here if anywhere!"

"Yes."

"This is the skeleton of the guard, evidently, who was placed here to defend it."

"To be sure."

Frank advanced and touched one of the iron bars.

It crumbled to dust.

It was easy to push the rotten door in.

Beyond was a small, square room. It had not a window in it.

And there, piled one upon another, were a number of metal chests.

But even as Frank attempted to lift the cover it crumbled.

In the chest there lay revealed a great mass of gold coin. Doubloons and guineas were piled up in heaps.

It was certain that they were gold, for the action of time and the water had not destroyed their tissue.

They were as clean and hard as the day they were minted.

The sunken gold was found.

The mighty treasure lay before them. Wallis was so overcome that he was obliged to sit down.

Frank counted the chests, and made an estimate of the amount of the treasure.

Then he placed his helmet against that of Wallis', and shouted:

"We have found it!"

"Yes."

"The next thing is to get it aboard the Sea Serpent."

"How can we do that?"

"I will show you."

Frank took a handful of the coin, and then led the way back to the hatch.

A few moments more and they were both on deck.

The Sea Serpent could be seen in the distance wedged in the coral reef.

Frank knew that it was necessary to first release the submarine boat before attempting to remove the treasure.

By bringing the Sea Serpent alongside the wreck it would be an easy matter to transfer the gold.

With this plan outlined in his mind, he set out for the Sea Serpent.

It was a rough climb, but the two explorers finally made it.

They reached the submarine boat, and quickly went on board.

Barney and Pomp and Hank Greenbush had been waiting anxiously for their return, and were delighted to see them.

Wallis threw down some of the gold doubloons upon the cabin table, and in response to Hank's query, cried:

"Treasure! Well, I should say so! There are barrels of those beauties over there on that wreck. It is only in order now for us to bring them over here."

Hank picked up one of the coins and examined it closely.

He was the most tickled Yankee on earth, and muttered:

"Gosh all blazes! I reckon I kin buy Squire Pilkins' farm an' marry Sally Styles an' settle down right handsome like. Whoop-la!"

He gave a sudden yell and executed an Indian war dance.

Barney and Pomp applauded vigorously and cheered him loudly.

The spirits of all on board the Sea Serpent were now high.

But Frank Reade, Jr., realized well the seriousness of their position, and also that no time was to be lost.

He at once called to Barney and Pomp.

"A'right, Marse Frank!"

"Phwat will yez have, sor?"

"I want you to come with me!" said Frank, peremptorily; "bring a light!"

The two servitors obeyed. Frank led the way down into the hold of the ship.

"What are you going to do, Frank?" asked Wallis, with interest.

"Well," replied the young inventor, slowly, "I am going to make an effort to learn if possible if the shell of the Sea Serpent is damaged."

"How can you do that?"

"Simply by crawling through it, which I can do, even up to ram itself."

"Good!" cried Wallis, joyfully. "If you find it intact——"

"If I do," said Frank, hopefully, "then there is a good chance for us."

"But if you do not?"

The young inventor shook his head dubiously.

CHAPTER XI.

OUTWITTED BY THE MALAYS.

"I hardly know," he said. "It is barely possible that we may be able to patch the break, and thus continue safely."

"Heaven pray it may be so!" said Wallis, devoutly.

"I shall hope for it."

Frank Reade, Jr., now entered the hold, followed by Pomp and Barney.

It did not require a great while for the young inventor to discover that his worst fears were realized.

A sharp edge of the coral had punctured the shell of the Sea Serpent.

It was enough of a breach to make extremely dangerous the attempt to remove the vessel.

As long as it remained in its present position there was little danger of the water coming in.

But if it should be moved or the coral dislodged from it the leak would be sprung.

There was no doubt that this would certainly be fatal.

The Sea Serpent would never be able to rise to the surface.

It was a horrible thought.

But Frank Reade, Jr.'s brain was of the rarely inventive sort. His genius was not of the kind to be easily baffled.

He had not studied upon the matter long before he hit upon a plan.

He returned to the hold and thence to the cabin.

For hours, with the aid of Barney and Pomp he worked at putting a huge patch over the break.

Finally it was finished.

He then looked carefully about for another leak. But luckily no such a thing was to be found.

There was nothing now to bar the safe removal of the coral from the vessel's deck.

Frank had decided upon a plan to successfully accomplish this, when a most startling thing occurred.

Barney had been in the pilot-house, and was amusing himself with flashing the searchlight through the water.

He turned it upon the treasure ship and was astounded at what he saw there.

He could hardly believe his senses.

Yet certainly there, plainly visible, were three men in living suits of the ordinary kind.

The life lines could be plainly seen.

It was a tremendous depth for divers of that kind, and Barney wondered at this.

But he reflected that the divers were probably Malays, who were capable of almost any hardship in the water.

The divers seemed to be engaged in removing something from the hull of the treasure ship.

"Be me sowl! 'Tare an' 'ounds!" gasped Barney, for a moment paralyzed, "it's afther makin' off wid the gold that they be!"

This was a fact.

As soon as the Celt could collect his scattered senses he raised an outcry.

Instantly everybody came rushing into the pilot-house.

The Celt had only to point to the treasure ship for the situation to be at once understood.

The sensations of Frank Reade, Jr., and Wallis, can be imagined.

"By Jupiter!" cried Wallis, angrily, "it's the dogs of Malays, and they mean to try and carry off the treasure!"

"It certainly looks that way!" agreed Frank, coolly.

"And they are succeeding. See that?"

At this moment a huge black object attached to a line, went up through the water and out of sight.

For a moment, Frank Reade, Jr., was too paralyzed by the discovery to move.

Then the problem presented itself as to what move he should make.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed, "I don't know what to do. Just now the Sea Serpent is hors du combat!"

"But something must be done to prevent those wretches from lugging off our treasure," cried Wallis.

"Yes," agreed Frank, making quick action, "we'll stop that. Come Barney and Pomp, bring out the diving suits!"

These were quickly produced.

"Get into one, Barney!" commanded Frank, "and you, too, Wallis!"

"But what are you going to do?" asked Wallis.

"You shall see. I mean, of course, to prevent their game!"

"Then we shall have to attack them in these suits?"

"Yes," replied Frank.

"Good!" cried the excited young treasure hunter. "We will give them fun."

Axes were taken for weapons, and the three divers left the Sea Serpent.

The Malay divers had been working diligently. It was evident that the pressure was too great for them, and that they could not stay much longer under water.

Frank Reade, Jr., was only hoping that they would remain where they were until he could reach them.

But the rascals did not seem disposed to do this.

They were obliged to depend upon the precarious rubber life-line for their air. The Sea Serpent divers needed neither cord nor rubber tube.

Therefore they would certainly have the advantage in a battle.

The Malays evidently realized this, and chose to adopt discretion as the very better part of valor.

So, as their dreaded foes came rushing up they took an upward flight.

When Frank and Barney and Wallis reached the treasure ship, the Malays were beyond reach.

Frank put his helmet close to that of Wallis, and shouted:

"They have beaten us!"

"Yes."

"But I hope they have not taken the treasure!"

"I fear they have."

Frank and Wallis climbed down into the hold.

Barney remained on guard.

It required but a few brief glances for Frank and Wallis to read the disheartening truth.

The Malays had really discovered the treasure and carried it away.

Only a small bag of the doubloons was left, worth only a few thousand dollars.

The anger and disappointment of Frank and Wallis was far greater than words can express.

There was no immediate way of pursuing the thieves.

First of all it was necessary to release the Sea Serpent.

The chagrin of our friends at the certain conviction that Wesley Hawkes and his gang had forestalled them cannot be expressed in words.

Wallis was furious.

He raved up and down the treasure ship's deck, and shook his fist impotently at the foes above.

But this could avail them no good.

The only move left now was to release the Sea Serpent, let her rise to the surface and give chase to the pirates.

It was the only move left.

Frank saw it, and was not slow to adopt it.

"Ready all!" he made sign with his hands. "Back to the Sea Serpent!"

And back to the Sea Serpent they went post-haste.

Once more on board the bag of coin which was all that was secured of the great treasure, was opened.

The sight of it just whetted the appetite for more.

It was claimed that the treasure gold lawfully belonged to them, and that in taking it the Malays had committed theft.

"The gold belongs to us," said Frank Reade, Jr., firmly, "and if we live to reach the surface we will have it."

"Good!" cried Wallis. "We must recover the gold at all costs."

"And we will do it," said Frank, grimly.

But the question now was as to how the Sea Serpent was to be released from the coral reef.

This was a question of no slight importance.

But Frank Reade, Jr., was possessed of an inventive intellect.

He was not of the kind to be easily baffled. Therefore, it was not long before he got to work.

Donning the diving suits, Barney and Pomp went out with hawsers and drills.

It was easy work enough to drill holes in the soft coral.

When a hole had been drilled two feet into the reef, Frank put in a charge of dynamite.

Then he had all stand by, and Barney and Pomp returned aboard the Sea Serpent.

As soon as this was done, Frank pressed the electric button which was to fire the dynamite.

He did so, and the result was most gratifying.

The dynamite exploded with a gentle shock, and the coral rolled aside in large fragments.

A few of these continued to rest upon the Sea Serpent.

But Barney and Pomp went out and removed them by hand. The submarine boat was now free.

Frank Reade, Jr., was not the one to waste time.

He knew that it was necessary to at once get in pursuit of the pirates.

So he gave the lever a twist which sent the Sea Serpent to the surface.

Up it went, and in a few moments daylight was about them.

Frank threw open the doors and the dead-eye windows, and admitted the pure air of nature into the boat.

It was a relief simply to be resurrected from those tomb-like depths of the sea.

Instinctively the crew of the Sea Serpent felt this, and indulged in a hearty cheer.

"Now," cried Wallis, "we must find the pirates and reclaim the sunken gold, which is really ours."

"Right!" cried Frank Reade, Jr.; "and that we will do."

None on board the Sea Serpent but were of this mind.

There was no doubt but that Hawkes and his pirate gang, gloating over their ill-gotten gains, had returned to the Malay fort.

Thither then it was in order to go.

So the Sea Serpent's head was turned toward the island.

Very soon the submarine boat was just off the coast, and in a short while would be in sight of the Malay town.

Frank was busy preparing the guns for deadly work.

"You are going to give them a lesson, Frank?" asked Wallis.

"I am going to blow them all from the face of the earth!" declared the young inventor, resolutely.

The pneumatic guns were made ready, and other matters about the Sea Serpent put in ship-shape order.

Then Frank entered the pilot-house and held the submarine boat at full speed straight for the Malay harbor.

CHAPTER XII.

AWFUL DISASTER.

Frank Reade, Jr., was deadly in earnest in his declaration that he would blow the Malay pirates from the face of the earth.

His ire, and his sense of vengeance as well, was aroused by his knowledge of the awful fate of the merchantman which he had witnessed.

"They are pirates and cut-throats," he declared; "there is no reason in the world why they should be shown any mercy."

"In that you are right," agreed Wallis. "It is no sin to destroy them, root and branch."

"And that I intend to do," declared Frank, firmly.

Very quickly now the Sea Serpent rounded the point of the island and came into the harbor.

There were, however, but half the number of proas there that had been.

Where the others had gone it was not easy at that moment to guess.

But Frank held the Sea Serpent straight into the harbor.

The appearance of the dreaded foe had now been noted by the crews of the proas.

Instantly there was a scattering.

Frank was about to open fire, when he was restrained by an incident.

One of the proas advanced directly toward the Sea Serpent, and a white flag was conspicuously displayed.

"Hold on, Frank!" cried Wallis, "it is a truce."

"All right," replied the young inventor, "what do they want?"

"Let us find out."

"We cannot waste time."

"That is true. It may be that they want to surrender."

However, the Sea Serpent was brought to, and the proa was allowed to draw near.

A Malay of villainous features stood in the bow.

He spoke in Portuguese:

"What does Tuan (master) want in this isle? He does not want trade?"

"No," replied Frank, in the same tongue, "I don't want trade. I want to know what you have done with those chests of gold which you stole from the hold of a ship sunk off the reef there?"

"Ah, you forget! Sunken gold belongs to the finder!"

"But we are the finders!"

"Impossible!"

"No."

"We have the gold!"

"You stole it from us!"

"That is wrong. We did not trouble you at all. Our divers brought up the gold. If you did not get it it was your fault."

"You are partly right," agreed Frank, "but we first found the gold. Moreover, the secret of its presence here was stolen by a miserable wretch of our nationality, who is now in league with you."

"Does Tuan mean the two white men now with us?"

"Yes."

"They are our friends!"

"Friends!" sneered Frank. "They are villains of the deepest dye."

"Will you surrender?"

Frank was astounded.

"Surrender?" he repeated.

"Yes," retorted the Malay, pompously. "We have six ships to your one. There is no hope for you!"

Frank laughed scornfully.

"So that is your game!" he cried. "Well, it won't work. We will die, but we will never surrender!"

"Then you must die!"

"Hark ye, Malay!"

"I hear."

"I can blow you and your fleet and your town from the face of the earth. Now I call upon you to surrender. If you do not, woe be to you!"

The Malay laughed contemptuously. Then suddenly the figure of another appeared by his side.

He was a white man, and was almost instantly recognized.

"Wesley Hawkes!" gasped Frank.

"Shoot the wretch!" hissed Wallis.

But Frank said coolly:

"Wait a bit."

Then the young inventor gave a hail:

"Hello, Hawkes!"

"Hello," replied the villain.

"You have turned pirate, eh?"

"You can see!"

"I admire the gang you are in!"

"That is cheap talk!"

"Here is something which is not," returned Frank. "I hold in my hands the power to blow you from the face of the earth. If you do not surrender in three minutes I shall proceed to do so, and the earth would be well rid of you!"

The villain laughed contemptuously.

"Surrender!" he cried, scornfully, "why, we are a hundred to your one!"

"Ah, but you are not armed as I am!"

"Try us and see!"

"Last warning, Wesley Hawkes. I advise you to make your peace with God!"

"But you can't fire into a flag of truce?"

"No; nor do I intend to. I would like to ask one question."

"Well?"

"Where is the sunken gold?"

A scornful, triumphant laugh came from the villain's lips.

"That is beyond your reach!" he retorted.

"One more!" cried Frank. "Who is answerable for the souls of those poor wretches who went down with the merchant ship a short while ago?"

In spite of his hardihood the villain winced at this.

"I had nothing to do with that," he declared. "You know what Malays are!"

"Yes; I know what they are," retorted Frank, "under the control of such an arch villain as you are."

"Spare your insults!" cried Hawkes, haughtily; "the interview is ended. We shall retire to a point just back of yonder proas, and then you may have an opportunity to learn the weight of Wesley Hawkes' vengeance!"

With this implied threat the Malay proa made away. Frank was relieved when it was gone.

"Well!" cried Wallis, "what is the order now, Frank?"

"Wait a reasonable length of time for that flag of truce to return. Then we will blow every one of those proas from the face of the earth."

"All right!"

Suddenly Frank glanced at the sky.

He gave a peculiar start. It was covered with a light yellow haze. What did it mean?

Was it to be another hurricane?

However, Frank knew that he had nothing to fear with the submarine boat. So he turned his attention to the Malays.

He went forward and loaded each pneumatic gun.

Upon the return of Hawkes the Malays had seemed to be seized with a frenzy, and made the air hideous with their yells.

The proas all started forward now for the Sea Serpent.

Frank could not help a laugh.

"Poor fools," he muttered; "they don't know what they are doing."

He trained the pneumatic gun upon the nearest proa.

Then he pressed the electric key.

There was a recoil, a hiss, and the projectile went on its way.

It struck the proa fair and square with an unearthly roar.

In an instant the water rose in a mighty column. When it fell nothing was to be seen of the proa.

"Heavens! what vengeance," cried Wallis, with awe.

"They will never want to meddle with the Sea Serpent again," said Frank, grimly.

Yet the proas were coming again to the attack.

Once more Frank trained the gun. This time it was upon the proa in which he saw Hawkes.

"This rids the earth of a monster," he muttered.

There was a flash and a roar. Another of the proas was gone. This second bolt of death had its effect upon the Malays.

They must have seen the utter, sheer folly of attempting to do battle with so powerful an adversary.

As with one consent, they turned to flee.

Frank's hand was once more upon the lever. But he hesitated.

It was always a matter of aversion with him to take human life, even as miserable as that of a Malay.

But at this moment a thrilling cry came from the deck. It was the voice of Pomp.

"Golly fo' glory, Marse Frank!" screamed the darky. "Wud yo' jes' look at de likes ob dat?"

The dull haze in the atmosphere had increased greatly and now there was a sullen, distant roar.

The water in the bay began to heave violently. On shore the ground was rocking and tossing in billows.

A terrific gust of wind, almost tornado like, swept over the coast. In an instant Frank realized the awful truth.

It was one of those mighty convulsions of nature—the earthquake, and Frank had but to turn a backward glance to see its awful accompaniment—the tidal wave.

The young inventor stood for a moment overwhelmed with horror.

"My God! What will become of us?" came through his clenched teeth.

In that flash of time Frank beheld awful sights.

He saw the proas overturned and the Malay village sink into a mighty crevice.

Then the Sea Serpent was picked up by the tidal wave and whirled and carried through darkness and sleet and huge bodies of water.

It was in the grasp of the awful tidal wave.

All clung to the nearest stationary thing. Over and over, round and round the submarine boat seemed to be whirling.

Instinctively, however, Frank had pressed the lever which closed the doors and windows.

Suddenly the end came.

There was a jar, a grinding shock, a jolt, a bellowing of waters in cataract, and the boat was stationary.

So confused, so dazed and bruised were the voyagers, that for some moments they could not recover themselves.

When they did Frank raised his head to feel spray sifting all over him.

He looked up to see the blue sky above through a cloud of spray, which waves outside were throwing over a huge break in the cabin roof.

It was seen in that awful moment that the Sea Serpent was a complete, a hopeless wreck.

From stem to stern she was twisted and rent and torn. Water filled her hold, and every movable article aboard was broken.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

With a mighty effort Frank Reade, Jr., pulled himself together.

The appalling fact was hard upon him that the Sea Serpent was wrecked.

He crawled up through the ragged rent in the roof and looked about him.

It was an awful scene.

The sky was clear, the yellow haze was gone, and the sea lled in gentle, undulating billows.

But the smiling island just now so green and lovely—what of it?

It was not there.

Perhaps an acre of jagged coral reef was all that was left of it.

And perched high upon this was the wreck of the Sea Serpent.

The submarine boat, as Frank saw at a glance, was far beyond repair.

It was an awful moment.

"My God! We are done for this time, Frank!"

It was Wallis who had climbed out and stood by his side.

They exchanged glances.

"It looks like it," said Frank.

"The Sea Serpent is beyond saving."

"Yes."

"And—the sunken gold——"

Frank turned burning, hollow eyes upon his companion. His manner was almost frenzied, as he said:

"Don't speak to me of the cursed stuff. It is sunk forever. Let it stay there."

"But how will we ever get back to America?" asked Wallis.

"There is a chance that some passing ship may pick us up. If not, we will have to stay here and die."

"We have provisions?"

"Yes; for quite a long time."

"Then let us cling to hope."

But that hope seemed long deferred, indeed, as time passed, and yet no sign of a friendly sail appeared.

Weeks drifted by. Life upon that barren reef was almost unbearable.

It seemed at times as if the adventurers would yield to madness. Many times the impulse was upon them to leap into the sea.

"I am done with sunken treasures," said Wallis, bitterly. "Hank Greenbush, it was an unlucky day for us all when you found that fatal MS."

"Gol durn it, yew kain't blame me fer that," spluttered the Vermonter. "Gosh hanged if we didn't have a look at ther gold anyway."

"You're right, Hank!" said Frank Reade, Jr. "And if

it hadn't been for that wretch of a Hawkes we would have it now and be on our way home."

"Golly, dat am a fac'!" agreed Pomp.

"Be jabbers, it's only a streak of hard luck, that's phwat it is!" declared Barney.

But it was not meant that our adventurers should perish upon that miserable reef in the South Pacific.

One day a white sail appeared upon the horizon.

It drew nearer and was signaled. The castaways were taken on board the Nipsic, one of Uncle Sam's Pacific cruisers.

They were safely conveyed to Honolulu, from whence steamer passage was secured to San Francisco.

But little was saved from the wreck of the Sea Serpent.

Only a few thousand dollars of the sunken gold was brought back, and the magnificent work of Frank Reade, Jr.'s genius, the submarine Sea Serpent, was left a hopeless wreck in the South Pacific.

There it probably lies to this day. It would have been folly to attempt to reclaim it.

But Frank announced his intention of going at once to work upon a new invention.

"It shall eclipse all others," he declared, in a determined manner.

The voyagers were all glad enough to set foot once more on American soil.

Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, returned to Readestown.

Hank Greenbush went back to his native Vermont, cured of all desire to ever go in quest of sunken gold again.

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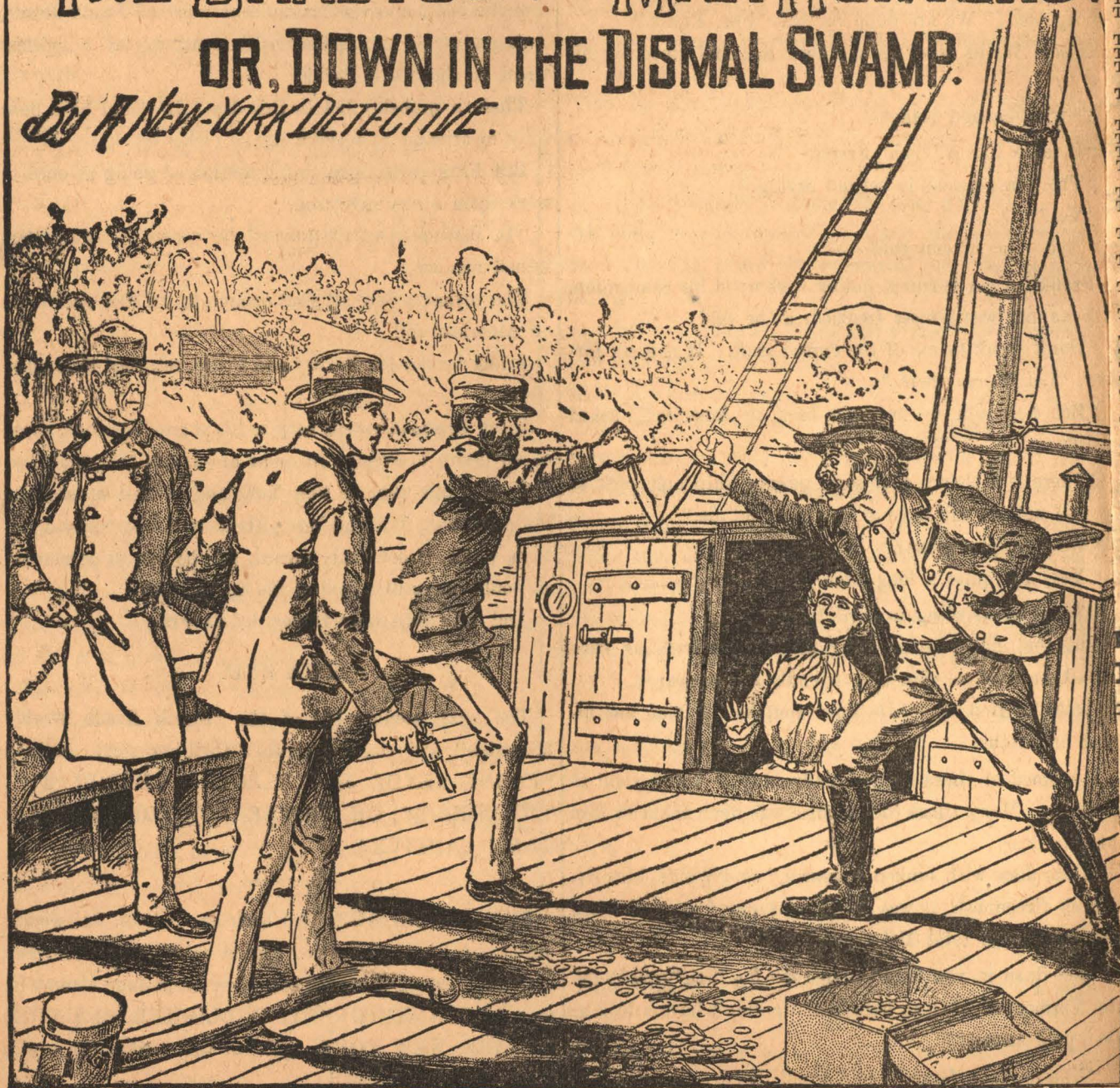
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